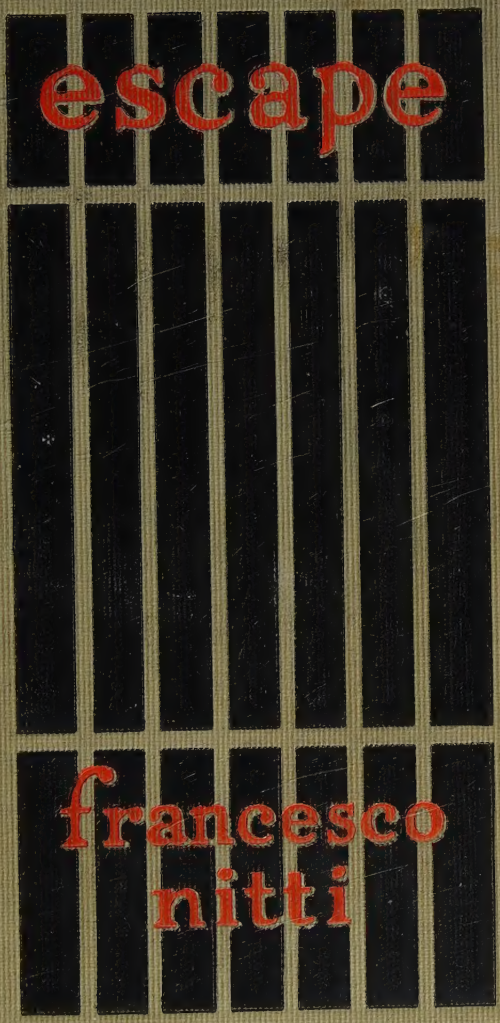
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FREEDOM AT LAST! THE THREE FUGITIVES, WITH THE AUTHOR ON THE EXTREME LEFT, AND TWO OF THE UNNAMED COMPANIONS WHO HELPED THEM ESCAPE.

ESCAPE

THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF A POLITICAL PRISONER WHO WAS RESCUED FROM LIPARI, THE FASCIST "DEVIL'S ISLAND"

BY

FRANCESCO FAUSTO NITTI

WITH A PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR'S UNCLE

EX-PREMIER OF ITALY

PUBLIC LIBRARY

WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK : LONDON
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ESCAPE

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PREFACE

FEW adventure books are as interesting as this one. For here is truth which is stranger than fiction—experiences almost unbelievable in this modern age of alleged freedom of thought and political action.

It's the simple story, without any literary pretence, of three young men who were deported to the island of Lipari for their political ideas, and were condemned without any trial—in fact without even interrogation—to a painful and humiliating penalty.

It's the story of their flight, almost improbable for its audacity, from the Island of Grief, Drama—Italy's "Devil's Island."

Lipari is a small island near Sicily. No one can approach it freely. About six hundred

agents of the Fascist Government watch day and night five hundred deportees. Warships, powerfully armed, rapid motor boats with cannons and machine guns around the island, render escape well nigh impossible. To attempt escape means almost certain death.

But nothing is truly impossible for three men possessing ideals and disposed to face any danger.

The most interesting part of this book concerns the characters who act its drama. Emilio Lussu, Carlo Rosselli and Francesco F. Nitti, actors of the drama, are not Revolutionists: in America or England they would represent progressive elements of great moderation.

Rosselli and Nitti are only thirty years old, while Lussu is thirty-six. But their lives have been consecrated to the ideals of Democracy and Liberty. All three honourably participated in the war. Nitti went voluntarily at the age of seventeen; Lussu has been considered for a long time as a national hero. Captain of the Sassari

Brigade, he fought in France and Italy with heroism. His soldiers admired him for his valour and loved him for his kindness. His achievements during the war are legendary and gained for him the greatest honours.

Nothing lacked to make these three men's lives happy. They belonged to three comfortable, middle-class families; they were intelligent and energetic. Lussu and Rosselli are lawyers; Nitti was a bank employé. Rosselli, a student of political economy, taught in a superior university. Lussu, beloved in his district, was elected M. P. in Sardegna.

But theirs was an idealism which would not resign itself to servitude.

All religions have the same ideal base; all express the same need of elevation to God. All, when they are practised with sincerity, develop the spirit of sacrifice. Lussu belongs to a Catholic family; Nitti is the son of a parson of a Protestant-Methodist family; Rosselli is of a Jewish family.

In the Nitti family the love of liberty and democracy has resisted all persecutions; the great-grandfather of the writer of this book was murdered in a reactionary movement; the grandfather was condemned to death in 1848; the father has for thirty years preached the gospel of Christ among the Italian folk poisoned by clericalism. The Rosselli family is rich and respected and has a great democratic tradition. The greatest idealist and thinker of modern Italy, Giuseppe Mazzini, died in the Rosselli house.

The three young men condemned to imprisonment on the island of Lipari represent therefore the flower of a healthy middle-class, educated to reverence, respect and love, the greatest ideals. There is no violence in their hearts, only the devotion toward those principles of democracy and liberty which are the base of modern civilisation.

Why were they deported to the island of Lipari?

Because they were opposed to Fascism. They were not even interrogated; they were not tried by any judge; they could neither defend themselves nor accuse.

Mussolini represents a mediæval adventure in Italy. Until some fifteen years ago, Communist and Anarchist, he defended regicide, anarchist crime, political assassination. He has written and predicted individual revolt. He has always considered all religions (these are his very words) like opium, to lull people to sleep. He has written and repeated for twenty years in his discourses that the abyss between Capitalism and the Proletariat should be filled with the heads of Capitalists. Again in the year 1920 he incited workmen to occupy factories and to pilfer. In 1914 he laughed at the Belgian occupation and urged the Italians to rebel against those who wanted to drag them into the war.

Not having succeeded in making a red revolution, he attempted the white reaction, taking advantage of the discontent after the war. He

succeeded with the help of a few generals and part of the army who wanted reaction. The book of G. Salvemini, "The Fascist Dictatorship," is the narration of this sad adventure of the Italian people.

Becoming Dictator, Mussolini has not only foresworn all his past, but has introduced the most terrible reaction. All form of liberty has been suppressed; press liberty, association liberty, reunion liberty. Members of Parliament are practically nominated by the government. All political associations have been dissolved. All towns are administered by a Fascist delegate who is called "podestà." You cannot practise any profession, business or art without being inscribed in a Fascist syndicate. The magistrates have lost all independence. There are no more judges, no solicitors because they must be Fascists. To maintain this absurd state of things, an enormous police force has had to be created which costs almost three times as much as the one in France. Worse still, six kinds of

militia have been created which control the whole national life.

The order reigning in Italy is not any different from that of Sing-Sing. It is not spontaneous order, but a crystallised disorder. All Italians except a small minority hate Fascism, but no free manifestation is allowed.

The artificial situation has impoverished Italy. All economical index shows a great depression. All industries are paralysed; there is an agricultural crisis. There are more bankruptcies in Italy than in any other country in the world.

But Fascism has an immense propaganda system abroad which hinders all knowledge of the truth. The revelations of *Harper's Magazine*, the New York *World* and the Chicago *Tribune* have partly torn the veil of the falsehoods diffused abroad.

Fascism has a simple way of freeing itself from opponents; it deports them or kills them. No trial is necessary. There are procedures much more summary.

It pretends abroad that the persecuted men are Communists. The truth is that the greatest persecutions are directed against men of temperate ideas; Democrats and Conservatives alike. Many revolutionists, starting from the very collaborators of Mussolini, are instead in the government or Fascist administrations and easily find a way to exercise their violent predilections.

Many among those killed were notably temperate. The Deputy Amendola belonged to the most conservative wing of my party. The Deputy Matteotti, killed in a most atrocious manner, was among the temperate socialists. He belonged to a rich family and was above all a great teacher of the people and an active cooperator. Pietro Gobetti was a young writer of unusual intelligence of the new Italian generation and was merely a Democrat. Mussolini ordered that his life should be made "hard" (the autographed document has been published and is in the book of Salvemini), and the order was

so punctually executed that Gobetti lost his life.

Even now there are professors, deputies, writers and even generals among the deportees on the islands. The great master of masonry, Torrigiani, was deported without being tried. General Bencivenga, who had the highest reputation during the war, is still on the island of Ponza.

A very interesting phenomenon for historians is the fact that dictatorship is a product of clericalism and militarism. Nearly everywhere, after the spiritual crisis of the war, grave difficulties have been met. But in the Protestant countries—America, England and Germany—there has been a resistance to every idea of personal power and dictatorship. Vice versa, in Catholic countries—Italy, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Hungary, etc.—it has rapidly developed. If France has saved herself, it is because the mass of the population is anti-Catholic, or at least anti-clerical.

The writer has related only that which he has seen. The names of the personages are all real and nearly all of them are alive, persecutors and persecuted, executioners and victims.

This book has but a partial continuity. It starts a story which cannot all be told—*now*.

The dramatic escape was prepared by young Italians who, to free their companions, faced every danger.

It has not been possible to give their names because that would expose them and their families to atrocious persecutions. Fascism has introduced a terrible system into Italy which reminds one of the darkest methods of the middle ages. When an effort against Fascism is made abroad or in Italy, the Dictatorship tries not only to punish those responsible, but their families as well. Fathers, brothers, sisters must answer for every anti-Fascist activity.

When Italy returns to freedom and this book may be circulated among the Italians, the author

must complete it—tell all of the story which cannot now be told.

FRANCESCO NITTI,
Ex-Prime Minister of Italy.

PARIS, November, 1929.

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ESCAPE

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CHAPTER I

A MAN crept stealthily along the narrow jetty that ran out into the sea on the darkest side of the little harbour.

Along the waterfront, only a few hundred yards distant, blazed the lights of taverns where fishermen were drinking noisily. At the foot of the narrow, winding street leading up into the town groups of soldiers were lounging and playing cards, their rifles between their knees. The lights from the houses revealed the black outline of warships lying in the harbour. But the jetty along which the man was crawling lay deep in the shadow of the steep, volcanic rocks, crowned by a huge old castle that overhung the town.

Periodically, one of the soldiers would look up

from his game and cast a searching glance at the people passing in the street.

"Cursed life, this, on Lipari!" growled a sergeant in the uniform of the Fascist militia. "Always on the lookout for friends who might try to give one the slip. And if they ever do, Lord save us from the Commandant!"

"No one has ever escaped from Lipari since the Duce made it what it is," remarked a grizzled veteran of the military police. "Remember the last one we recaptured in the hills after he had gone without food for ten days?"

"Anyway, it will soon be nine o'clock and time for us to make the rounds to see that all our chicks have gone to roost," said a third player philosophically. "I play trumps."

The creeping figure had reached the end of the jetty. Softly, without rising to his feet, the man let himself down into the black water. It closed above him without a ripple.

A dozen strokes farther out, where the shadows were deeper still, he rose to the surface, gasping

for air, and began swimming swiftly. It was a warm July evening but the sky was overcast. There was no moon and the stars were hidden.

He headed for a rocky point on the coast nearby, which was prolonged under the sea by a reef over which the swell curled in white foam. As soon as his feet touched bottom he stopped, remaining submerged up to the neck. Although now concealed from the quays of the town, he was still within sight of the ships.

Straining every nerve, he listened. But for the splashing of the water all was quiet. The alarm had not been given.

But where were his comrades, the two staunch men who had shared his sufferings and with whom he had planned to make this desperate dash for freedom? They had arranged to meet him at this place and hour, but there was no sign or sound of them. And it was already late, dangerously late.

And where was the boat which their distant friends had promised would be waiting for them,

on this night of all nights, to bear them to safety on foreign soil? Why did he not hear the throbbing of its engines? It must come quickly or else all would be lost.

For eighteen long months he and his two comrades in exile had planned and prepared the events of this night. They had acted all sorts of comedies to lull the suspicions of their jailors. With infinite patience and ingenuity they had evolved a method of communicating secretly with their friends in free foreign countries. Everything, down to the slightest detail, had been weighed and tested, and now, at last, the night had come for them to match their courage and wit against a dictator's absolute power.

Once before they had waited under the rocks but had looked in vain for the rescuing motor boat. A great storm at sea had driven their friends off the coast. They had only just managed to steal back to the town and be "present" when the guards made their rounds. By a miracle they had passed through the lines

of sentinels unseen or unrecognised in their disguises.

But tonight the solitary fugitive could hope for no such luck. It was already too late to return in time, if his companions had been discovered by the guards on their way to the rendezvous, or if the motor boat should again fail them. There would be nothing for it then but to seek refuge in the desolate interior of the island and trust to the help and protection of friendly peasants. But even the honest fishermen had been corrupted by the police, with their offers of rewards for the arrest of escaped prisoners, and frightened by threats of ruthless punishment if they assisted or concealed them. Sooner or later, he would inevitably be taken, and recapture meant tortures more barbarous than any he had yet undergone.

Perhaps the motor boat had missed the place of rendezvous and was even now cruising blindly about in search of him and his comrades. Resolutely he spread out his arms and began swim-

ming with powerful strokes out into the darkness.

Almost immediately he heard the sound of oars and his heart stood still. The police were on his track! They had come out for him, after having taken his comrades. He turned to dive away from his pursuers, but already the high bow of a vessel loomed up over him out of the night. Dark shapes leaned over the side and voices called softly: "Friends!" It was the launch at last! They had stopped the motor, which could be heard by the warships in the harbour, and were rowing to keep the vessel from being swept by the incoming tide towards the town.

Strong arms pulled him on board and embraced him as he stood dripping on the deck. The Commander whispered rapid questions.

"Where are the others?"

"They were not at the rendezvous."

"We cannot wait any longer. We are drifting towards the harbour and we dare not start the motor."

"If they are living, they will come."

A suppressed cry of joy broke from the men peering over the side. The white faces of two swimmers rose on the crest of a black wave. An instant later the three refugees were reunited with their rescuers.

In that moment of triumph and relief the shrill blast of a bugle rent the silence of the summer night. Other bugles answered in the town and their call was taken up by the whistles of the warships. The night patrols had discovered the escape of the prisoners!

But the Commander of the motor boat only smiled grimly as he gave the order to get under way.

With a roar, the powerful engines started, and heeling far over as it circled, the swift boat dashed for the open sea.

At once the harbour burst into sound. Confused commotion replaced the orderly silence. Boats pulled off from the quay with the crews of destroyers who had been spending the evening on shore. A police launch cast off from its moor-

ings and headed towards the shadowy launch of the rescuers. With a roar it started, a sinister bloodhound unleashed on the trail of its prey. And then, as quickly, the chatter of its exhaust stopped as its engine stalled. From the launch they saw men working frantically over the motor.

"Good luck, that!" the Commander grinned.

Distant shouts of command, the hubbub of the awakened harbour, were drowned as the roar of their own engines gained volume. Their slender vessel shot through the black waters of the bay, piling up a great wave almost to the level of her bows.

"What are we making?"

"Twenty-eight knots," smiled the Commander.

The swiftest of the police boats could not come within five knots of such speed and the destroyers were not yet manned.

Searchlights swept the harbour in all directions and for an instant the fugitives on the deck of the flying motor boat stood in the full glare of a dazzling white beam. The cracking of machine-

guns was followed by the boom of a four-inch rifle and a shell shrieked through the air. It fell short in their foaming wake. A twist of the wheel swept them back into the sheltering darkness.

The sounds of pursuit died in the turmoil of their mad flight as the boat's bow crashed into the swell of the open Mediterranean. The lights of Lipari, their island prison, faded in the thickening sea-mist. To starboard a lurid glow on the horizon revealed the isle of Vulcano, with its active volcano, standing like a menacing sentinel across their course.

All night long they raced on at full speed. Standing by the wheel, the silent Commander, who had come five hundred miles to save them, hearkened anxiously to the rhythm of his motors. If only they would keep on running smoothly, success was in sight. Intent on his mission, he scarcely took notice of the fugitives huddled on deck in their scanty clothes. They, also, were too tense with excitement to think of seeking shelter in the cabin, or even to recount their adven-

tures to their rescuers. Dazed with the joy of regained freedom, they peered out over the dark sea, full of hope and fear.

Once their way seemed barred by a myriad red and green lights. Without lessening their speed, they shot through a fleet of fishing boats. Curses were hurled at them by the island fishermen as they dashed past, leaving frail vessels tossing in their wake. Again, their hearts stood still as a big ship hove suddenly in sight. They recognised it as a troopship, bringing replacements of men and guns to the islands from which they had escaped, but it held on its course, vanishing into the night as mysteriously as it had appeared.

Daybreak found them off a shadowy, mountainous coastline that lay like a bank of clouds on the horizon.

"Take your last look of Italy," said the Commander. "Yonder lies the Sicilian coast."

Long and earnestly the refugees gazed at the fast fading land. A mist came before their eyes.

Despite all the injustice they had suffered there at the hands of cruel and ruthless jailors, who were their countrymen, it was the land of their birth to which they were bidding farewell, perhaps for ever.

Late that afternoon, after having evaded by skill and good fortune the warships ordered by wireless to intercept them, they set foot at last on foreign soil on a rugged but hospitable coast, free men once more in a free land.

I, Francesco Nitti, was one of the three men who escaped on that memorable night of July 27, 1929, from the island of Lipari, chief of the ancient Æolian Isles, transformed by Dictator Mussolini into a convict colony for all who venture to oppose his rule. We were the first to carry out, among thousands of political prisoners, a successful flight from these islands of the damned. So far, alas! we have also been the last.

A few days after our happy landing, I and my

comrades, Emilio Lussu and Carlo Rosselli, were sitting together on the terrace of the Café de la Paix in Paris. As the bright, free life of the Parisian boulevards passed before our eyes, it seemed to us that we were dreaming a beautiful dream, or that we had awakened from some horrible nightmare. It seemed impossible that an arbitrary government could have inflicted such torments of mind and body on any man in this age of liberty. As a revelation to the world of the reign of terror whose victims we were, I have set down in this book the true story of our adventures.

CHAPTER II

1

THE prelude to the sombre drama that culminated in my escape from the lonely island of Lipari, after arbitrary imprisonment and bitter suffering, was enacted in the Roman Campagna on June 10, 1925. At the time, of course, I myself had no premonition of the tragic influence which the events of that fateful day were to exercise over the next few years of my life.

The date was the first anniversary of the death of Giacomo Matteotti, the Italian Republican Deputy, who was "taken for a ride" by agents of the Fascist Secret Police and murdered at the "Quartarella," a lonely spot in the country beyond the Flaminian Bridge, by order of Dictator

Mussolini. After the murder and the ensuing revelations, which caused a tremendous sensation throughout the world and for a time even seemed to threaten the existence of the Fascist Government, the "Quartarella" had become a place of pilgrimage for all Italians who still believed in liberty and justice. For months men and women strewed flowers on the spot, but eventually the authorities recovered their assurance and took measures to prevent further demonstrations.

Despite these difficulties, I and three of my friends decided to honour Matteotti's memory by placing flowers on the place where he was killed. We knew that all roads of access to the sacred spot from Rome were barred by armed men, police and Fascist militia. But we started early in the morning, going a long way around in order to arrive from a different direction.

Descending from our car with our flowers, we found the "Quartarella" guarded by military police and detectives. The ditch where Mat-

FRANCESCO NITTI.

teotti's body was discovered, with severed head, was fenced off from the main road with barbed wire. Nobody that year was authorised to visit the spot, except the murdered man's widow.

I felt singularly stirred to find myself on the site of a tragedy that had filled me with revolt and loathing for its perpetrators and compassion for its victim. But for the presence of the police, all was silent and deserted, imbued with the deep melancholy that is characteristic of the Roman countryside.

The police had orders not to allow anyone to pay any kind of tribute to Matteotti's memory. In vain we argued with them. At last we begged them to take our flowers and place them on the spot themselves. After much hesitation one of the detectives accepted our bouquet of red carnations and passed them negligently to one of the uniformed policemen who flung them disdainfully into the ditch. Then fixing his eyes upon us with an ironical smile the detective ordered us to give him our names.

He took a long time writing them down in his notebook, making us spell them for him. When he came to my name he glanced at me significantly.

"Probably you are a relation of former Prime Minister Nitti?" he asked.

I admitted my relationship with the great Liberal statesman who had refused to adhere to Fascism, and he murmured some incomprehensible words.

On our way back to Rome we were stopped by a big car full of Black Shirts. They all jumped down, shouting and brandishing revolvers and rifles.

"Where are you coming from?" they demanded.

"From Viterbo."

It was, as a matter of fact, the direction from which we were coming.

"Where are you going?"

"To Rome."

They examined us suspiciously and talked in

low tones before letting us pass. We had a distinct feeling that if they had known from where we were coming, our earthly troubles would have been over there and then.

As it was we reached the Eternal City safely. But from that day I began to notice that I was being shadowed. I had committed an unpardonable crime—how unpardonable I was yet to learn —by honouring a martyr's memory with flowers.

2

The murder of Giacomo Matteotti has had a decisive influence on the development of my political ideas. However, already before that horrible crime, I was spiritually and intellectually a convinced and irreconcilable opponent of Fascism. I was led to this opposition by my own observations of its despotic methods as well as by hereditary and family influences.

My family, both on my father's and mother's side, has for centuries stood for liberty, democracy and freedom of conscience. For one thing,

they have always been Protestants, even in those times when to be a Protestant in Catholic Italy was deemed a crime. My father is a pastor of the Italian Episcopal Methodist Church. All his life has been dedicated to preaching the Word of Christ. He has filled high offices in the Church and in charitable organisations. My mother, ever a faithful companion and assistant to her husband, sacrificed the years of her youth to the education of her children. Even now, in the midst of atrocious suffering caused by illness, she is always serene, always strong and full of faith. During my imprisonment on the island of Grief, no sorrow, no persecutions could break her spirit. The thought of my mother suffering so far away tormented my soul, but the letters she wrote to me, full of courage and Christian patience, were my greatest comfort.

Her people were amongst the first Protestants in Florence when the city was ruled by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. They held secret meetings to worship God after their own fashion and to

work for the independence of their country. The Madai brothers, Count Guicciardini, the Lippi family, and others famed in Florentine history were members of that group. They were often persecuted and cast into the Grand Duke's prisons.

In such surroundings, in a deeply religious and Christian atmosphere absolutely contrary to violence of any sort, I grew up under the guidance of my parents and inspired by their example. Together with condemnation of all acts of force and brutality, I learned from my parents to cherish individual liberty. Protestantism is a great school of liberty. Through it I learned to escape from the absolutism of political and social dogmas, and in its atmosphere I grew up ardently desiring liberty for all, great and small, as the primary foundation of social progress.

Great Liberal traditions were held sacred in our family. My great-grandfather, Francesco Nitti, a noted physician and surgeon, had been for years cruelly persecuted by the Bourbons.

Sentenced to death, he faced the executioners with the cry: "Long live Liberty!" His four sons participated in the war for national independence. Two of them were condemned to death. Another of my great-uncles, the father of Francesco Nitti, who was Italy's Prime Minister before the advent of Fascism, rose to leadership in the war of independence. A square in my native city bore my great-grandfather's name, but the Fascists have erased it.

Since his entry into Italian political life, my uncle, Francesco Nitti, has been an outstanding leader of Italian democracy, which he represented in Parliament for twenty years. Now an exile in Paris, he has struggled all his life against dictatorship in all its forms and is, therefore, an untiring and fearless opponent of Fascism. As all the world knows, the Fascists sacked his residence in Rome in 1922 and made various attempts to assassinate him and his family. Had he but been willing to sacrifice some of his political ideals, the highest posts in the Fascist

Government would have been open to him. Thus, family traditions, education and religious training all combined to inspire me with love of liberty and hatred of violence.

When the World War broke out I was only fifteen years of age. The ideals which had formed my character impelled me to embrace the cause of the Powers who were fighting for liberty and justice, and to hail with enthusiasm Italy's entry into the conflict. As soon as I reached the age of seventeen I entered the army as a volunteer and went to the Front. I took part in several important actions and was considered a good soldier.

The star of Fascism was rising when I returned from the battlefields. It was a very different sort of Fascism from that in operation today. Its leader, Benito Mussolini, an ex-Communist and enthusiastic advocate of violence, was noted as having lauded regicide and defended the Anarchists who threw a bomb into the Colon Theatre at Buenos Aires. In the first Fascist

program, Mussolini proposed to distribute the land to the peasants, to abolish all banks, to suppress the Stock Exchange, to abolish the army and so forth. It was a collective revolutionary program that greatly excited many young people who adopted it in good faith.

However, the movement suddenly changed in character. Repulsed by the Socialists, Mussolini formed a "White Guard" to fight them. Soon there were affrays all over the country and atrocious crimes were committed by the Fascists, who burned down newspaper offices, plundered private dwellings, and beat up and killed their political opponents. The Fiume incident helped to feed the excitement. After the resignation of Premier Nitti, my uncle, and of Premier Giolotti, the Government was too weak to resist the Fascist "march on Rome," which a few thousand soldiers, under an energetic leader, could have easily frustrated.

At the advent of Fascism I had a distinct feeling that the Italian people were being led, with-

IN 1922 THE HOME OF FRANCESCO NITTI, THE AUTHOR'S UNCLE AND EX-PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY, WAS DESTROYED BY THE FASCISTS IN ROME. ABOVE ARE TWO INTERIOR VIEWS OF THE WRECKAGE.

out any possibility of salvation, into an epoch of absolute slavery. The mentality of the new Government, born of the union between Nationalists and Fascists, was exceedingly strange. It exalted the aristocracy, clericalism, reaction; its leaders were wont to speak of the people as brutal masses that must be dominated; they glorified violence as a method of government and proclaimed as their aim the establishment of a dictatorship. In 1923, the Fascist militia was constituted and the political police reorganised, with its vast system of which I was soon to be one victim among thousands, foremost of whom was Giacomo Matteotti, the young Deputy, whose assassination by Mussolini's henchmen definitely converted me to anti-Fascism and was destined to influence my future in such a strange and dramatic way.

3

It was in the dark days following the murder of Matteotti, when I was studying law at the University of Rome, that I had the honour of

making the acquaintance of his widow, Signora Velia Matteotti, the sister of a great artist famous in America—the baritone, Titta Ruffo. Not content with having killed her husband, the Fascists persecuted the unfortunate woman in every way, even going so far as to sing indecent songs under her window. At times they used to assemble before her house and chant: "We'll make sausages out of Matteotti's flesh!"

In the first hectic days following the crime, Signora Matteotti's house had been a gathering place of the adversaries of Fascism, but the police kept a watchful eye on her visitors and fear gradually drove all but the most devoted friends away. A highly cultured woman, with great nobility of character, Signora Matteotti was not surprised that her house should be thus deserted in a world of opportunists.

While all—or almost all—shunned the empty house of the martyr and his lonely widow, I felt that it was incumbent upon me to render her homage. Those silent rooms still seemed filled

with Matteotti's brave and kindly spirit. Here he had worked, dreamed, loved and suffered; preparing himself conscientiously and fearlessly for the sacrifice he knew to be inevitable. I clearly felt that he had sacrificed himself for all of us Italians, and that his act would bear fruit.

When the second anniversary of Matteotti's death came around, I went to call upon his widow with a bunch of flowers which I intended to ask her to lay upon the place where he was murdered. I felt that I could not visit the "Quartarella" myself this time, as I had done the year before. Events were moving fast. The Fascist police were more ferocious and stronger than ever. I knew that I should be stopped and arrested before reaching the sacred spot.

As I was going up the steps of Signora Matteotti's house, I noticed that the janitor pointed me out to a man who was with him. Under the Fascist régime all janitors in Italy have been formed into a vast and dangerous organisation of spies. In order to get a job as a janitor, a man

must have the approval of the police, and to get that he must serve them. The janitor examines all the letters of the tenants, notes down all their comings and goings, observes their visitors, reports their conversations and habits.

Announcing that he was a detective, the man asked me where I was going. I replied that I was going to visit Signora Matteotti. He then wanted to know who I was and all about me. I satisfied him and he permitted me to proceed. I gave the flowers to the poor widow and related what had happened at the entrance. She was not surprised. She told me that everybody who visited her, without distinction, was stopped and questioned. Even two nuns asking for alms had been subjected to inquiry.

On leaving the house I was again hailed by the detective, who wanted to know how and when I had made the acquaintance of the Matteotti family, and whether I was related to Premier Nitti. He made full notes of everything and then let me go.

After this encounter I fully expected a visit from the police. As a matter of fact, a few days later a police commissioner and two detectives appeared in my apartment. They ransacked all my papers and even looked through a pile of old newspapers heaped in a corner. The commissioner asked me some more questions.

"What is your occupation, Signor Nitti?" he inquired.

"I'm working in a bank."

"That I know. I mean, your private occupation."

"I haven't any."

He smiled ironically and pointed to the pile of Republican newspapers.

"They are papers which I read. They are printed in Italy with the permission of the Government. I am a Republican and therefore read Republican newspapers."

He sprang up and gave me a fixed look.

"We shall see," he said.

To tell the truth, this visit did not make much

impression on me. The atmosphere in Italy is such that a little thing like a police raid no longer excites people. But I noticed that the number of my bodyguards increased. I learned that the police were very much interested in me; that they liked to know at what time I came home in the evening, whom I received, where I spent my free time. My letters often showed signs of having been opened.

During many evenings a man of a certain age, adorned with a monstrous mustache, followed me when I left the bank. I used to take him with me for a walk and sometimes to the theatre or cinema. Whatever I liked, he liked; he was a good watch-dog, following me faithfully a few steps in the rear. But it seemed to me that he was a little ashamed of his sordid duties, for when I turned around and looked at him, he used to blush and turn his head away.

Thus passed the last months of my life in Rome. Who would have dreamed of what was in store for me? The storm was gathering more

and more thickly over my head, and I did not know it. I was innocent enough to think that, sooner or later, the police would get tired of following me and watching over me like an important personage travelling incognito. I was only sorry that I could not go to Signora Matteotti's house any more. I stopped my visits chiefly because I feared they might result in more persecution of that noble woman by the authorities.

Some of my friends were already being shadowed in the same manner as myself. More than one of them left Italy at that time and thus evaded the fate which Destiny had reserved for me.

CHAPTER III

ON the evening of December 1st, 1926, I returned as usual from the bank where I was working to my apartment in the Via Firenze, just off the Via Nazionale, in one of the modern residential quarters of Rome. Without any premonition of evil, I retired early to rest and slept soundly. But at half past six in the morning I was awakened by loud and imperative knocks at my door.

Three men entered, headed by a man of herculean stature, who seemed to be their chief.

"Signor Nitti," he said, without removing his hat, "we are police officers and have been sent here by the Commissioner, who desires some information from you. Dress yourself and come with us."

His voice was harsh and authoritative. I felt

at once that if all that was wanted was "information," it would have been sufficient to invite me to call at the police station. Evidently it was more serious.

While I was hesitating one of the detectives crossed the room and stationed himself near the window.

"Am I under arrest?" I asked.

As though he had not heard my question, the leader of the intruders continued peering around the room. His glance rested on the volumes of Mazzini, Manzoni and other apostles of Italian liberty, which formed my modest library. I understood that protests were useless.

When we stepped out into the street all was still, silent and deserted. I had no idea of what was awaiting me, but when I crossed the threshold of that house in which I had spent so many happy years I had a distinct feeling that I would not see it again. One of the policemen held me by the arm as we marched quickly to the police station of Magnanopoli, a few blocks from my

house. There I was introduced into a dimly lighted room, full of dusty papers, and invited to seat myself on a shabby divan. A young man seated at a table was pretending to read a newspaper. From time to time he raised his eyes and glared at me. At the other end of the divan was sitting an old gentleman. He, also, gave me a swift glance. I noticed that he had a pleasant face, bright eyes and an intelligent expression. Thus, for a while, we three observed each other in silence.

But the old gentleman and I had already concluded a silent alliance. We understood that the young man at the desk represented the enemy. Holding out my hand to the old gentleman, I introduced myself.

"I am happy to know you," he said. "I am Antony Campanozzi, the Deputy."

It was a name that was very well known to me. Until recently, Campanozzi had been managing editor of a newspaper called "La Giustizia."

"You also have been called here to give information?" I asked.

"Yes, they woke me up at five this morning. I live with my old sister, who is easily disturbed; they frightened the poor old soul to death. But I have no illusions. After the last outrage at Bologna, you know that special legislation has been enacted against all opponents of Fascism, who are henceforth to be tried by extraordinary courts and sentenced to deportation."

While we were whispering together a tremendous racket was going on outside the room. Telephones were ringing, imperious and angry voices were shouting orders, hurried steps echoed along the corridors, doors banged, typewriters clicked. The police were working feverishly for the defence of the Fascist state. For this was the hour when the heads of all police stations in Rome are wont to exchange information regarding the persons arrested in the course of the night's raids. Since the beginning of 1926, the practice had been introduced in Rome and all

larger Italian towns of arresting all citizens found in the streets after ten o'clock at night without documents establishing their identity and loyalty to the satisfaction of the authorities.

Police patrols invaded cafés and restaurants, arrested people at haphazard, loaded them into police vans and drove them to the nearest police station, where the poor devils had to spend the night on hard wooden benches, in nauseating guard-rooms, herded together like animals being led to slaughter. As the system of "identity cards" did not yet exist at that time, it frequently happened that even the most loyal adherents of Fascism were compelled to spend a night in jail. The object of the police was to terrorise the public by arresting big groups of people for no reason whatever.

The police commissioners used to say to the leaders of the patrols, before they set out on their nocturnal rounds: "To-night you must arrest three hundred persons." The patrols usually started out at about ten o'clock. Most of

the men composing them had a family, a sweetheart, or a good glass of wine awaiting them somewhere. So it was only natural that they exerted themselves to arrest as many persons as possible in the shortest possible time, so as to be free to go about their own affairs. This system is still in force, and it is very dangerous, particularly in Rome, to go out of the house after ten o'clock at night. For the "Duce" resides in Rome and his life must be protected.

We waited about three hours for the arrival of the Police Commissioner. Finally an official entered the room and nonchalantly informed us that we must go to the Central Police Station to give the "information" required of us. I protested, pointing out that I was due at the Bank at nine o'clock and was already late. He took no notice whatever of my words, saying only that we could go to the station by taxi at our own expense or wait until five in the afternoon for the prison van.

Campanozzi and I looked at each other with

a smile. If we had entertained any doubts of what was awaiting us, this announcement was calculated to dissipate them. We ordered a taxi.

Only when the taxi was at the door, the official turned to us and said:

"I must tell you that you are going to prison."

"We know that. But what crime have we committed? Who ordered our arrest?"

The official grinned cynically at what he evidently considered a childish question.

"No order is necessary," he replied. "The magistrates have nothing to do with this case."

We were driven rapidly to the prison of Regina Cœli. It is a huge building, constructed about thirty years ago at the foot of the Janiculum Hill, in the Vatican quarter. With bitter irony it is named after the Virgin Mary, for its name in Italian means "Queen of Heaven."

Great iron gates closed behind us, as the two policemen who had accompanied us handed us over to the prison guards. We were pushed into a guard-room, already full of political prison-

ers. It was a long, narrow apartment, without furniture of any kind, not even a chair. The dark walls were full of inscriptions and discoloured by moisture.

Among the prisoners who came forward to greet us were many friends and acquaintances, men who played a prominent part in the intellectual and political life of Italy. I recognised Signor Baldassari, a noted lawyer; Signor Graziadei, son of a brilliant member of parliament; Signor Bruno de Donno, well-known journalist; Signor Tino Sinibaldo, of the *Giornale d'Italia,* famous Conservative newspaper; Signor Brighenti, clerk of the Rome City Hall, and several other notable personalities. All of them had been arrested that night.

They informed us that we should all be deported. Nevertheless, they were in good spirits and bade us keep up our courage.

We were called up by name one at a time by a uniformed warder. When my turn came, I was taken into a room where a number of officials

were engaged in writing in bulky registers. It was the registration office. I was asked my name, occupation, opinions, everything about my life, several times over. My answers were carefully entered in the registers. Then I was measured and photographed.

From there I was taken to the searching room, a cold, dismal place, lighted only by a very small window through which one could just get a glimpse of the Roman December sky. Here I found some of the friends I had met in the guard-room, among them Campanozzi. We were ordered to strip. We left our clothes on a long wooden bench and stepped over to the opposite side of the room.

Naked and shivering with cold, we watched the prison officials go through our clothes. They did their work minutely and the operation lasted not less than a quarter of an hour for each one of us. They examined each garment separately, starting with the shoes. They took away our shoe-laces, belts and suspenders. This was, of

course, to prevent us from committing suicide by hanging ourselves. They also confiscated all metal objects. Metal might be moulded into instruments to cut prison bars. Silk shirts, handkerchiefs and ties were likewise seized. It was feared that a prisoner might corrupt his warder in poor Italy with a present of a silk shirt! Naturally, all our money, watches, chains, rings and cuff-links were taken, as well as pens, pencils, notebooks and paper. The latter were evidently deemed particularly dangerous possessions, for the searchers even ripped open the lining of our coats to make sure that we had not concealed pencil-leads there.

When we were marched from that room to the cells we were in a pitiable state. Our clothes, tattered and without braces or belts, were dropping off our bodies and we had to hold them up in order not to lose them on the way. Campanozzi, being an old man, had suffered more from cold than the rest of us while standing about naked. They had even seized his spectacles on

the pretext that the rims were made of metal. He tried to protest, explaining that he was so short-sighted he could hardly see anything without his glasses.

"It's no use insisting," one of the warders barked at him brutally. "If you want your glasses ask for the doctor to-morrow, and if he says you need them, we'll see about it."

In all Italian prisons, the prisoners are now addressed with the "voi," the pronoun of the second person, which is generally used only in speaking to servants or to inferiors in the army.

Poor old Campanozzi staggered out, coughing, to his cell. He did not leave with us for the islands. I learned later that he had been deported to a savage region in the mountains of Sardinia, where he hovered long between life and death with pneumonia.

CHAPTER IV

IT was already dusk when I was locked up alone in a cell in the seventh division of the Regina Cœli Prison. Climbing on a wooden stool, I looked out of the narrow, barred window. I could just see the summit of the Janiculum Hill, crowned with one of the most beautiful public parks in Rome. A red light gleamed through the gathering darkness; it changed to white and then green, flashing the Italian national colours against the nocturnal sky. It was the revolving light of the lighthouse on the Janiculum, presented to the Italian people by their countrymen of the Argentine Republic, on the fifth anniversary of Italy's independence and unity.

The memory of that stirring event seemed a

mockery to me that night. The changing colours of the lighthouse seemed to remind me that the sacrifices made by the martyrs of Italian independence had been in vain and that the country had succumbed to despotism more brutal and ruthless than any foreign domination.

Next day began the regular routine of prison life, monotonous and uniform, which I was to lead for three weeks. At eight in the morning we were taken out for exercise in the courtyards of the prison, for three-quarters of an hour. Each courtyard was about thirty feet long, and three or four prisoners were let into it at a time.

During one of these morning walks I met Professor Agesilao Filipperi. He was the son of one of the most intimate friends of Mazzini, the famous Italian patriot. As an educator of Italian youth, he had devoted his life to carrying out his father's ideas. He had founded and organised schools for the people. He had occupied important posts on the Roman Municipal Council. But today he was a "dangerous suspect,"

and the fact that he was a Liberal and a friend of the people was sufficient for him to be cast into prison.

"I was arrested on the charge of having organised an armed uprising against the Facist Government," he told me, "because the police discovered on the premises of my school half a dozen rusty old muskets which my boys used for gymnastic drilling! Hundreds of my old pupils gave their lives for their country in the War; many were invalided and decorated. But I am here in jail, like a criminal, waiting to be deported to some desolate island."

Early every afternoon the doors of all the cells were opened, under the watchful eyes of the warders, and the prisoners had to sweep the floors. I waited anxiously for this moment, because it was possible to exchange signs, and sometimes even a few words with the prisoners in adjacent cells. Thus, I learned that within the last few days about eight hundred persons had been arrested for political reasons in Rome alone

and would probably all be deported. All the prisons in the Eternal City were crowded with "suspects." The most unexpected meetings took place between prisoners. Intimate friends encountered each other in filthy guard-rooms; brothers found themselves suddenly in neighbouring cells, each ignorant, until that moment, of the other's arrest. Many deputies of the opposition parties had been arrested, in spite of their parliamentary immunity.

News circulates with lightning swiftness in prison. Despite my isolation, I received words of sympathy from several political prisoners, who had heard of my arrival, although their cells were in different divisions.

Three times every twenty-four hours, twice during the day and once in the middle of the night, warders made the rounds of our cells. They assured themselves that all was in order, striking the bars of the windows with a hammer to see if they had been sawed or cut.

In Italy, prison warders are recruited from

the lowest and most ignorant classes of the population. Most of them are natives of Sicily, Calabria and Sardinia. The poverty and unemployment prevailing in these Provinces impels them to offer their services to the Government for very little money. They are badly treated and subjected to stern discipline. The slightest omission of duty is punished by deduction from their miserable pay. So these rough men grow more and more embittered, and they seek to revenge themselves on the prisoners committed to their charge.

"Be careful not to offend any of the warders or you will get 'Saint Antony,' " my fellow prisoners warned me.

The torture known in the prisons of Rome as "Saint Antony" is worthy of the Middle Ages. Prisoners believed to be refractory are suddenly seized by three warders and hustled off to solitary confinement in a special cell. As soon as the victim enters, a heavy rug is thrown over his head. Then the warders beat him up until he

drops fainting on the floor. They leave him lying in his blood.

It is practically impossible for the victim to lodge any complaint against his tormentors. To whom shall he complain, and against whom? The Prison Superintendent is almost inaccessible, and the rug thrown over his head makes it impossible for him to identify his aggressors. I have known several cases in which prisoners received permanent injuries through undergoing "Saint Antony." Some were lamed for life, others suffered internal lesions that made them invalids for the rest of their days.

Prisoners are frequently sentenced, on the slightest pretext, to ten, fifteen or even twenty days' solitary confinement. The cells reserved for this purpose are veritable mediæval dungeons. They are situated in the most remote parts of the prison, to which no sound of the outside world penetrates. Each cell is about four and a half feet long and three feet wide. It is almost entirely dark, for the tiny skylight high up above is

heavily barred and thickly covered with dust. Only at noon, when the sun is shining most brightly, does a faint gleam of light fall into that dungeon. At three in the afternoon it is already night.

A man imprisoned in one of these cells has the feeling of being buried alive. Bread and water are his only food. A wooden bench fixed to the wall is his bed. With a horrible refinement of cruelty, the prisoner's drinking water is kept almost out of his reach. It is contained in a metal vessel chained between the bars of the grating in the door. In order to drink you must go down on your knees on the floor, pass your arm through the bars and bring the can to your mouth. You can just barely touch it with your lips. It is the torture of Tantalus, revised and corrected for modern Italians.

By a miracle, I was saved from the horrors of "Saint Antony," but many of my comrades spent weeks in the darkness of those terrible cells.

One morning, after my daily "walk" in the prison courtyard, a warder ordered me to follow him to a room on the first floor of my division. At a table in the middle of the room was a man in dark clothes. He had a heap of typewritten papers before him.

"Are you Francesco Nitti, the son of Vincenzo?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Then this is for you," he said, handing me one of the papers.

I glanced through it quickly. It was a document stating that, by virtue of the special legislation enacted for the security of the Fascist State, I had been sentenced to five years' deportation to a convict colony. It charged me with having committed "subversive acts against the political and economic institutions of the State, and of having at various times manifested the intention of modifying these institutions by violent means."

The paper was signed by the Secretary of the

Fascist Party of the Province of Rome, the Public Prosecutor, a colonel of the Fascist Militia, a Police Commissioner, and a Colonel of the Military Police. It was dated December 1, the day before my arrest.

When I had finished reading it, I asked the official:

"Can you tell me why I have been sentenced to five years' deportation without even having been examined?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The law provides for no examination," he replied. "All you can do is to appeal to the Minister of the Interior within ten days from to-day."

"But how can I appeal against such a sentence, based on such grotesque charges? How and why have I been accused of subversive acts? Whoever heard of my having intentions of overthrowing state institutions?"

"That'll do," said the man shortly. "It's none of my business. All I want from you is a receipt for this paper."

I understood that it was useless to ask questions, useless to protest. I signed the receipt. On my way back to my cell, I met a long line of prisoners who had received the same documents, decorated with the same signatures. The only difference was the name of the prisoner, which had been filled in with ink.

That day I had two companions in my cell. They were not political prisoners but common criminals. However, they were very polite, respectful and full of consideration. They begged me to excuse their involuntary intrusion, and assured me that they envied me because I was in jail for ideal reasons. Unfortunately, not all my comrades were so lucky; frequently they were compelled to share their cells with insolent and dangerous bandits, capable of any kind of brutality and crime.

My last hours in the Regina Cœli prison were made happy and tragic at the same time by the visit of my parents, who had been authorised to come to see me by Commander Belloni, at that

time Chief of the Political Police in Rome. The interview lasted ten minutes and took place in the presence of an official, who listened to all that was said. My father was very much surprised to hear that I had been condemned without trial or examination. My mother wept bitterly.

Many tragic scenes were enacted in the prison in those days, as prisoners sentenced to deportation bade farewell to their families. Aged mothers clung desperately to their sons; young wives raved and tore their hair, cursing the warders that dragged them away.

On the morning of December 14, I was informed that I was to be deported to the Island of Lampedusa. It is a small rocky islet lying between the south-western coast of Sicily and Cape Bon in Africa. Several of my comrades had the same destination. We were told that we should start in the night of December 17th or the early morning of December 18th.

On that fateful night I slept soundly. Al-

though it was repugnant to me to appeal against my sentence to the Minister of the Interior, I had given in to my parents' supplications and handed in a petition through the Prison Superintendent. I had no hope whatever of its success. Through newly arrived prisoners I had learned that the most serious charge against me was that of "conspiracy against the Government." The proofs of this crime, in the opinion of the authorities, lay in that fact that I had been "leading an altogether too serious and secluded life for a young man of my age," that I had "neither a wife nor a mistress," that I "didn't amuse myself like other young men," that I was a Freemason, and that I had "democratic ideas." That was sufficient to brand me as a dangerous plotter.

I was awakened by strange rattling and clanking sounds. At first I could not imagine what it was. Then I understood. Heavy chains were being dragged along the echoing corridors and thrown down before the doors of our cells.

CHAPTER V

A SQUAD of military police, under the command of an officer, was drawn up in the passage. Groups of prisoners, conducted by warders, were arriving from all parts of the prison. I counted: there were just sixty of us.

The gendarmes ordered us to line up and began to handcuff us. We had to hold out our hands with the wrists crossed. Then the heavy iron handcuffs were placed in position and fastened with a big screw. If the screws were turned too tightly, the pain was excruciating. These irons are called "Schiavettoni;" they are a relic of brutal ages, but they are commonly used in all Fascist jails.

When we had all been handcuffed, we were chained together four by four. The chain was padlocked to the handcuffs of the first prisoner,

passed through those of the second and third, and, again, locked to the fourth. Thus, each prisoner, besides being himself handcuffed, was attached to his three companions. The weight of the handcuffs, padlocks and chain was so great that we could scarcely stand upright. I looked along the long line of my sixty companions; in the bleak electric light of that cold corridor they seemed writhing in the coils of a glittering black serpent.

The officers in command ordered us to form fours. Awkwardly we obeyed, with a great clanking of metal. Our suitcases with our personal belongings, which had been sent by our friends and families and held until our departure, were set before us.

"Attention!" cried the officer. "Pick up your bags—forward march!"

It was easier said than done. We had to bend down all four together, and only after several vain attempts did we succeed in grasping the suitcases with our handcuffed hands. Then in column of fours, with our chains clanking, we

staggered down winding steps of stone. A heavy portal opened before us and we stepped into the street, where a line of prison vans was waiting. Some officers and men of the Fascist militia were lounging in front of the prison. They greeted us with laughter and jeers. Evidently, the sight of that long line of men in chains tickled their fancy.

Handcuffed, chained and loaded with luggage, we heaved ourselves into the prison vans under the watchful, mocking eyes of our guards. My chain companions were Signor Morea, a noted member of Parliament, and Signor Bruno, a prominent lawyer. I was struck by the appearance of an elderly man, about sixty years of age, whose face wore an expression of great kindliness and intelligence. I asked who he was.

"It is Doctor Giuseppe Massarenti, former Mayor of Molinella," my companions informed me.

I remembered that Molinella was a village near Bologna where Massarenti had organised an

agriculture co-operative society and schools for the peasants. He had introduced modern farm machinery, instituted regular hours of work and recreation and an equal division of profits. He and the inhabitants of the village formed one happy family, when the advent of Fascism shattered their dream. The patriarchal Mayor was arrested and the farmers driven from their homes and deported to Bologna. Their deserted houses were occupied by Fascists.

We left many of our friends behind us in the grim prison of "Regina Cœli," eagerly awaiting their turn for deportation. Some of them had to wait a long time in those mournful cells. Two months after I had arrived in Lampedusa, prisoners I had met in Rome landed on the island.

We were driven rapidly through the nocturnal streets of the city. I was near one of the small grated windows of the van and could look out. At every corner I noticed pickets of military police, armed with rifles. When we had crossed

the Tiber by the Cavour Bridge and neared the centre of the town, the number of police and troops increased. The authorities feared popular manifestations in our favour. On the Piazza Venezia a confused clamour reached our ears. Women's voices mingled with the angry shouts of men. We shuddered, thinking of the mothers, wives and sisters who had, perhaps, gathered to bid us farewell and were being brutally driven off by the police. Later, I learned that during that night many relatives and friends of prisoners had been arrested and held in jail for several days because they had attempted to call a last "Good-bye!" to us as we passed on our way to exile.

At the railroad station a long train, composed of third class coaches and several "prison-cars," was waiting. These cars are divided into a number of "cells," each just large enough for one prisoner. There is no light or air and the doors and walls are made of steel. Thus, in the summer these black holes are like scorching ovens, while in the winter they are as cold as an icebox. We

had to be unchained from our companions before we could be put into the cells, but we remained handcuffed. Policemen kept watch in the narrow passage connecting the cells.

That night there were not enough prison cars to hold all of us. About a third of our number was herded into third class coaches. I was lucky enough to escape the torments of the prison cars this time, but I was to become only too well acquainted with them later. On the other hand, those of us who were put in ordinary cars were not relieved of our chains. And the trip from Rome to Naples, our first stop, lasted fifteen hours.

We crossed Naples station with swollen wrists and aching limbs, but with a smile of defiance on our faces. On the platform we were at once recognised as political prisoners and many people gave us pitying glances and murmured good wishes as we passed. A white-bearded old man raised his hand in salute with tears streaming down his wrinkled cheeks. Soldiers of the

Fascist militia, on duty at the station, cast their eyes down as we looked them squarely in the face.

Once more boarding police vans, we were hurried to the Carmine Prison, the oldest and filthiest jail in Naples—which is saying a good deal. This time we were all locked together in one big cell. We were told that we should leave for Palermo that night. Extraordinary measures had been taken by the authorities to transport us as quickly as possible to our destination. As a matter of fact, it took us "only" ten days to arrive at Lampedusa, while ordinarily convoys of prisoners often spend thirty, forty, and even sixty days on the way to the island. The authorities were in a hurry because all the prisons in Italy were full at the time and they had to make room for new prisoners.

At last we were freed from our irons and able to rest our aching arms and eat some food, which our guards sold us at high prices. The officer in command had all our money and at our request

paid for what we ordered. There were many among us who had no money to buy food, but we shared everything equally.

It was during our wait at the Carmine Prison that I met Sarto, a fellow-prisoner, a splendid type of Roman workman.

"I am almost glad to be a deportee," he told me, "for in the last few years my life has been made almost impossible by police persecution. The Fascists wanted me to join the 'Fascio,' or Fascist battalion, of my district. They began by flattering me, pointing out that I had been an *ardito*—a brave and fearless soldier—during the War and that it was my duty to join them. The Fascists are very eager to enroll all War veterans, particularly those belonging to the working-classes. When I refused, the persecutions began.

"My home was searched. During the last ten years I have been arrested hundreds of times, charged with being a conspirator, a dynamiter, a dangerous criminal. Every time, they used to

keep me in prison a couple of days and then let me go. In consequence, I wasn't able to work regularly and soon I could no longer find any work at all. People were afraid to employ me because of the suspicion with which the police had surrounded me.

"One day I was taken to the police station and beaten until I was drenched with blood. They wanted to know 'where I had hidden the firearms.' 'Which firearms?' I asked, for I had never had any. 'The firearms!' they shouted, smashing me in the face. Bartolini, an official of the Secret Police, notorious for his cruelty, presided at this so-called investigation."

Other prisoners, who had overheard Sarto's story, also told of their experiences. They had been taken by the Fascists to the Barracks of Magnanopoli, of melancholy fame. Over the portal of these barracks of the Fascist militia are inscribed the words, *"Chi entra muore"*— "Who enters, dies." Above them is painted a skull and crossbones. The most barbarous tor-

tures are freely practised there on defenceless prisoners, whose only crime, often, is to have been seen reading an anti-Fascist newspaper or overheard making some remark criticising Fascism.

Chained and handcuffed once more, we were driven that same night to the port of Naples, where the steamer "Argentina," of the Florio Navigation Company, was lying under pressure to take us to Palermo. The gay city, circling the beautiful harbour, glittered with millions of lights, and from Santa Lucia, where the famous fish restaurants patronised by foreign tourists are, came the sounds of mandolins and guitars and soft voices singing Neapolitan folk-songs.

Struggling to keep step with our chain-companions and avoid toppling over, all four, into the sea, we toiled up the gangway of the ship and tumbled into her hold. We were ordered to lie down on the floor and told that, as soon as we were at sea, our handcuffs would be removed.

An officer came to inspect us. Apparently,

A TRAIN OF POLITICAL PRISONERS ON THEIR WAY TO THE TRIBUNAL. THE TRAIN IN THIS PICTURE CARRIES CARLO ROSSELLI, CHARGED WITH BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ESCAPE OF A COMRADE.

he was struck by Massarenti's noble and rigid features, for he asked him if his handcuffs were too tight.

"No, sir, thank you," replied the old man.

The officer saluted and turned away in silence. In reality, Massarenti's wrists were badly swollen, owing to the cruel pressure of the *schiavettoni.*

There was a gale at sea that night. Great waves dashed over the pounding steamer and in the dark hold where we lay it seemed to us as if we were plunging headlong into the bottomless pit. We could not sleep. With every roll of the vessel our chains rattled. Most of us were seasick. Massarenti had a high fever and was soon raving. Near me a young man named Sigfrido Ciccotti, son of a member of Parliament, who had escaped to France, was trying to keep up our spirits by cracking jokes. He wore a monocle in his right eye and gave himself such comical airs that we all had to laugh, in spite of our misery.

After fighting heavy seas for eleven hours, we sighted the coast of Sicily, and soon afterwards entered the calmer waters of Palermo Harbour. We were immediately taken to the prison of Ucciardone, which has the reputation of being the worst in all Italy. Scarcely had we entered the courtyard when a dozen warders rushed at us. They liberated us from our chains and handcuffs and ordered us to strip. Drenched with perspiration through the painful effort of carrying our suitcases, we stood naked in the pouring rain while the warders "searched" our luggage and clothes, which had been gone through countless times already.

With four of my comrades, I was locked up in a large cell where there were already about fifty ordinary prisoners. They crowded around us. When they heard that we were political deportees, they treated us with great respect and kindness.

These men had been in prison many months, charged with belonging to the "Maffia," the

famous South Italian Secret Society of Criminals, which Mussolini's Government claims to have wiped out. Among them were prosperous farmers, peasants, workmen and small employés. They told us that, in the course of a single night. the Fascists had arrested thousands of persons in Sicily, including the entire population of several villages. The villages were surrounded by battalions of Fascist militia and all male inhabitants over fifteen years of age were transported to the prisons of Palermo, Trapani, Girgenti, Messina, Syracuse and Catania. For months the prisoners did not know why they had been arrested. They were not allowed to communicate with lawyers, nor were they examined by a magistrate. A young man, one of these so-called "Maffiosi," told me his story in simple words:

"My grandfather, my father and three brothers are all in prison. One of my brothers managed to escape when he saw that our village was being surrounded, so they arrested his wife

and his sister-in-law. Some are at Messina, some at Trapani, but we have heard that shortly we shall all be transported to the mainland because all the prisons in Sicily are full."

"And what are you accused of?"

"I don't know. All I know is that another prisoner, a young man like myself, was informed a few days ago that he is charged with a crime committed in 1908. At that time he was only a year old. It seems incredible, but it is true."

Months later I heard how the trial of these poor devils had ended: hundreds of years of imprisonment had been distributed amongst them. But Fascism was able to announce proudly that it had exterminated the "Maffia" in Sicily.

When you speak of this "triumph" of the Fascist Government in Sicily, the Sicilians only laugh because they know very well that most of the genuine members of the "Maffia" joined the "Black Shirts" in time and even helped to carry out the raids whose victims were innocent peas-

ants. However, Signor Mori, Prefect of Palermo and obedient henchman of the "Duce," was appointed a Senator of the Realm in recognition of his services.

From Palermo, where we spent two horrible nights trying to sleep on straw mattresses full of vermin, we were transported in chains to Girgenti, a journey that took us a day and a half. We arrived at Girgenti in the afternoon of December 21st. It is a famous and beautiful place, with its ruins of ancient Greek temples and theatres, and fair view over the blue Mediterranean towards Africa, but all I remember of it is the steep, stony path up which we climbed to the big brick prison, tugging at our suitcases with hands that had been handcuffed for fourteen hours. One of my comrades, a young Roman named Camponeschi, was very ill and had to be partly carried up by his exhausted chain companions. The jail was, as usual, crowded with prisoners and I spent six days with fifteen companions in a cell calculated to

hold, at the most, half-a-dozen men. Hygienic conditions were frightful; it was almost impossible to breathe at night. After many vain protests, Massarenti obtained permission to speak with the Prison Superintendent. He begged him, in all our names, to hasten our departure for Lampedusa or to make more humane arrangements for our detention.

"I have received no orders for your departure," was the Superintendent's reply. "The sea is very rough and ships are unable to leave the port. I can't do anything to help you here; all the cells are crowded like yours, and every day more prisoners are arriving and I don't know where to put them."

Our sufferings became unbearable. One morning, Massarenti, in a frenzy, screamed at the warder who came to inspect our cell:

"Kill us all, right now, if you have the courage, but don't let us die here slowly like rats in a sewer!"

"No, no! I haven't got the courage!" said

the warder very seriously, and went away with a blank face.

We couldn't help laughing.

It was in that reeking cell that we spent Christmas. We obtained permission from the Superintendent to buy better food, and attempted to arrange a little dinner and be gay. For a while we talked and sang. But soon silence fell upon us and all night long we vainly tried to forget our misery in sleep, stretched on the filthy straw.

At last, at four o'clock in the morning of December 27th, we left Girgenti for Port Empedocle, a little town on the Sicilian coast, where we were to embark. A tiny steamer, the "Ustica," named after another convict island, was waiting there to take us to Lampedusa. The night was stormy and we were thrown about in the hold of the frail vessel and drenched with the water that flooded her decks. I lay on the floor until morning, listening to the crash of the seas against the ship's sides.

In the morning it was calmer. We were allowed to go on deck for air. Low on the horizon lay what looked like a faint shadow. It was the island of Linosa, a rock standing out of the sea. On board with us were two ordinary prisoners, sentenced to deportation to Lampedusa for robbery. They had already done time on the island and gave us some information about it. According to their account, we were doomed to dwell in a desolate and miserable place.

Lampedusa was sighted at two o'clock that afternoon. From the sea it showed stretches of red, barren land, topped with rocky peaks. As we steamed closer in, we saw some thin goats grazing in yellow, parched fields near the shore.

Before we cast anchor, a man none of us had ever seen before, attired partly in civilian clothes and partly in uniform, suddenly appeared on deck. He looked us all over from head to foot and shouted to our guards:

"Search all these fellows for me before landing."

Later, we learned who he was. A lieutenant in the Fascist militia, Francesco Veronica's name is abhorred by all political deportees. He was to make our existence on Lampedusa a constant torment.

We landed on the rocky coast some distance from the village where the convict colony is situated, for the ship could not enter the little harbour. Loaded with our chains and belongings, we tramped more than a mile along the beach. Our first view of the village was not reassuring. It seemed a squalid and poverty-stricken spot.

CHAPTER VI

THE island of Lampedusa lies in the Mediterranean, about midway between Malta and the coast of Tunis. It is one of the Pelagian group, belonging to Italy, and has a circuit of about thirteen miles. It is arid and rocky, and the sun of Africa beats implacably down on the sparse vegetation sprouting amid the stones that cover its scorched soil.

On the first morning that I awakened on Lampedusa, I strained my eyes in vain to see anything but stones, shrivelled shrubs and sterile earth, cracked with drought. At the foot of a rocky eminence a solitary palm-tree stretched its stiff leaves towards the sun—the only tree on that barren isle.

As I was gazing round, I heard a voice behind me say:

"Don't tire your eyes. You won't see any green meadows, clear brooks, nor shady woods. This is Lampedusa, a clod of dry earth always in need of water and covered only with stones."

The speaker was a young lawyer, named Paganelli, a poet in his leisure hours, who had already spent many weary months on the island. He had been one of the youthful Italian patriots who had joined Gabriele d'Annunzio's "legionaries" at Fiume, hoping to fight for a just and noble cause. Disillusioned by the failure of that romantic adventure and the opportunism of his leader, he had gone over to the opposition parties and been deported. He was to become one of my best friends on that desolate isle.

We were quartered in a low white building some distance from the miserable hovels that composed the "village." It consisted of one big room, about one hundred and twenty feet long and twenty-five feet wide. Along the walls was a long row of iron beds furnished with straw

mattresses laid on planks. Three windows supplied light and air. We found there already about twenty deportees, who had arrived before us, among them three members of the Chamber of Deputies: Signor Strebnich of Gorizia, Signor Picelli of Parma, and Signor Fora of Perugia.

Our life on Lampedusa was regulated with military precision. At seven o'clock every morning the doors of our vast cell were opened by the guards. At eight, the first roll call was held. Each of us was handed the sum of ten liras—less than fifty cents—the daily indemnity which the Government accords to political prisoners for their living expenses. Afterwards, we were free to walk around the village until five o'clock. At this hour we had to assemble before our prison to answer a second roll call. A company of carabineers was drawn up behind the police. The prisoners entered the room singly, after having answered to their names. Then the doors were locked for the night.

On the first day after my arrival, I wandered about the village. It consists of two streets—or, rather, unpaved lanes—indescribably filthy, enclosed by rows of little one-storied huts, in which dwell some hundreds of fishermen and their families. The men of Lampedusa set sail every year in the month of March, aboard their sturdy boats, for the African and Spanish coast, where they spend three or four months fishing for tunafish, lobsters and, particularly, sponges, which have a high market value.

I found the village full of a ragged and miserable crowd of evil-looking men—ordinary criminals, who had been deported to the island and were living under conditions very similar to ours, with the exception that they only received an indemnity of four liras a day (that is to say, less than twenty cents) with which they had to provide their food. There were about three hundred of these convicts on the island, men from the ages of twenty to seventy, living in a nauseous atmosphere of vice and moral degene-

ration. What little extra money they were able to make by working in the port, unloading ships or breaking stones, they immediately spent in the dingy taverns of the village, where they got drunk on thick, heavy wine of the country, which contains from eighteen to twenty degrees of alcohol. Attired in their convict clothes with black and yellow stripes, they prowled about the streets like beasts in a cage. In the evening, the echoes of their ribald songs, their quarrelling and fighting, disturbed our sleep. Regular battles were staged between rival gangs of criminals, in which daggers and knives, made out of broken glass and tin cans, were freely used. Blood flowed and men dropped, dangerously wounded. Then the police and carabineers turned out and rounded up the fighters, driving them with blows into their pen.

The physical decay of these convicts after a few months on the island was striking and terrible. Insufficient food, drink, vice and the cruelty of the guards soon wrecked their health.

I saw young men of twenty-five who looked sixty, emaciated, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes.

For us, these convicts presented a dangerous problem. At first, they were very respectful to us, offering their services and claiming to be our "friends." They had an idea that we were all wealthy and prominent persons. Me, they insisted on calling "Professor," because I wore glasses. They would come to us with downcast, hypocritical eyes and relate amazing stories of misfortune, in order to get some money out of us. We were taken in at first, but we soon discovered that they spent the money we gave them on liquor. Then, when we tried to keep away from them, they became insolent and aggressive, muttering that it was unjust that we should receive ten liras a day while they got only four, and that they were as good as we. They threatened to "give us a lesson some day."

Lieutenant Francesco Veronica was our master on the island of Lampedusa. Officially,

the convict colony was governed by the Police Commissioner. But he was a weak old man, infatuated with his pretty young wife, and he allowed the reins of authority to slip out of his hands. They were taken up, to our cost, by Lieutenant Veronica, who imposed his violent and brutal personality on the old Police Commissioner, as well as on the Commandant of the carabineers and his officers.

Veronica, who was destined to play a leading rôle in the tragedy of our existence on Lampedusa, was a young man about twenty-seven years of age, rather stout, but of athletic build. He was a native of Girgenti, where he was noted for his ferocity towards political prisoners. During the War he had been a notorious slacker. His uniform was always very elegant, but he had no medals for bravery to pin on it. I am convinced that he harboured a personal, implacable hatred against us. He had under his orders about two hundred men of the Fascist militia, eighty carabineers and about the same number

of policemen, who formed the garrison of the island.

One day, soon after our arrival on the island, three or four of us were walking together in the village. Sigfrido Ciccotti, with the inevitable monocle screwed in his right eye, and very well dressed in plus fours, was telling funny stories and we were all laughing.

Suddenly, we heard a harsh, irritated voice calling:

"Ciccotti, come here!"

Veronica was standing on the corner, with some of his officers, glaring at our friend and flipping his riding-crop against his shining boots.

Ciccotti went up to him and asked him what he wanted.

"You know what I want," said Veronica. "I want you to drop that ironical smile when you meet me. Understand?"

"You are mistaken, Lieutenant," replied Ciccotti. "I hadn't even seen you."

"You lie. I tell you that you looked at me as if you were making fun of me and that's enough. Next time you will feel my whip."

Veronica turned sharply on his heel. We began to understand what sort of man we had to deal with and promised ourselves that we would exercise prudence and calm.

Every three days the mail-boat was due to arrive from Sicily, but when the sea was rough it was delayed and frequently ten or fifteen days passed without news from our families and friends. We were not allowed to go down to the harbour, or near the seashore, not even to bathe, in spite of the heat, but we used to spend hours watching for the little steamer from a rocky eminence that overlooked the bay.

This ship brought practically all the necessities of life to Lampedusa, for the island produces almost nothing. Flour, vegetables, fruit, candles, kerosene, soap and even drinking water were shipped over from Sicily. There were only a few tanks containing rainwater on the island, and

from March till October not a drop of rain ever falls there.

Often the vessel carried, also, a human load: chained prisoners who had been sent out to join us in exile. By February we numbered a hundred and twenty political deportees, and our common cell, large as it was, began to be terribly crowded. We welcomed these new arrivals as brothers, asking eager questions about conditions in Italy. From them we learned that all the other islands of the group, Ustica, Favignana, Tremiti, Pantelleria and the more distant island of Lipari were full of political prisoners. News of friends who had managed to escape from Italy filled us with joy. We heard that six prominent opposition deputies: Eugenio Chiesa, who had been Minister of Aviation during the War, Framchinetti, Treves, Bergamo, Morgari and Buozzi had succeeded in reaching foreign territory by crossing the sea in small boats or passing over the Alps by perilous paths.

With our ten liras a day and the money we

received from our families, we bought and cooked our food. We messed together in groups of four and five. My mess companions were Giuseppe Bruno, a young lawyer from Rome, whose father was a high official in the Ministry of Finance, Signor Paganelli, Dr. Melchionna, Umberto Pagani and the Deputy Fora. The latter was our cook, while Bruno and I washed the dishes.

We rented a little room in a fisherman's hut and there we cooked and ate our meals in comparative peace and privacy.

Needless to say, all our letters—those we wrote and those we received—were rigorously censored. The censorship was particularly severe with regard to money. We were permitted to receive only fixed sums of money and only from close relatives. If the sum was larger, part of it was kept back. Five hundred liras was considered a huge amount and that is less than twenty dollars. Living in Lampedusa was very dear. Prices were twice, and even three times as high as in the large Italian towns. The two or

three storekeepers in the village were busy making fortunes at the expense of the deportees. Prisoners were not allowed to receive money from friends; if such money was sent, it was confiscated and the name of the sender at once communicated to the police of his place of residence. He was immediately subjected to police surveillance and, in many cases, arrested and imprisoned.

The ordinary convicts on the island were favoured in this respect. One of them, a certain Magnaghi, used to do odd jobs for us at times. He was a notorious member of the underworld of Milan, only twenty-six years old, but a veteran in crime. One day, one of us was relating, in his presence, that a postal order for four hundred liras, sent to him by his parents, had been confiscated, and that he had only been handed a hundred liras—which, according to Lieutenant Veronica, was sufficient for a month.

"What!" cried Magnaghi. "They take your money away like that! Why, they don't even do

that to us crooks—we get our money and other people's too. There are some fellows in our gang who get a lot of money. They are the 'Bosses' and when a lucky strike is made in some city in Italy, they get their part of the swag and nobody thinks of taking it away from them. You political prisoners seem to be more dangerous than us poor crooks."

As a matter of fact, some of the chiefs of these convicts were living a life of comparative luxury on the island. They always had plenty of money and often indulged in regular orgies with women from the village. The "Bosses" used to loan money to their fellow convicts at an exorbitant rate of interest, which they deducted from their daily indemnity of four liras on pay-day, under the eyes of the Fascist guards.

Every evening at five o'clock, the doors of our prison were locked. We passed the hours until it was time to sleep in reading and writing. My cot was between that of Signor Bruno and Deputy Morea. We had constructed some

brackets and a small cupboard on the wall above our beds. On these we placed oil lamps, by the light of which we studied and wrote far into the night, for the lights provided by the authorities were extinguished at eight o'clock. Massarenti used to make tea on a little spirit lamp. It warmed us, for, although it was very hot on the island during the day, it always became chilly at night. Sometimes, Massarenti used to read to us out of his favourite book, Victor Hugo's "Story of a Crime," which presented striking analogies between conditions in France at that period and those existing in Italy to-day. Sometimes, we read the Bible, and, although there were not many believers amongst us, all listened with pleasure.

Thus, we were sitting quietly together one night, when, suddenly, the door flew open and Lieutenant Veronica rushed into the room, whip in hand, followed by a squad of carabineers.

CHAPTER VII

"ATTENTION, all of you!" shouted Lieutenant Veronica, "and don't you dare move!"

The carabineers stationed themselves along the row of beds. The lieutenant began searching our luggage, taking all the papers and letters he found. He seized a packet of letters in my suitcase.

"Those letters have already been censored by you, Lieutenant," I remarked. "Each of them bears the censor's stamp."

"No matter," he muttered, throwing them into a big leather bag with the rest of the confiscated papers.

I exchanged glances with my companions, trying to imagine what was going on in that mad brain of his. His assistants brought him some

papers they had found among the belongings of Bruno and Morea. He glanced over one of the documents, smiling maliciously.

"Whose is this?" he demanded.

"It's mine," answered Morea.

"What are all those marks? What language is this? Where did you get it?"

I looked over his shoulder and recognised Arabic characters.

"I was sent as a special correspondent of my newspaper to Morocco during Abd-el-Krim's rising," explained Morea. "That is the permit given me by Abd-el-Krim. When I was arrested in Rome I happened to have it in my pocket."

Veronica listened in silence, with a scornful smile on his thick lips.

"So you've been to Morocco," he said. "And that bandit gave you a permit to pass. Very well, we shall see."

He stopped in front of Massarenti's cot and suddenly ordered one of the carabineers to rip

open the straw mattress with his bayonet. He watched eagerly, as if expecting to make some momentous discovery. Naturally, nothing was found. His disappointment made him furious. Pointing with his riding crop to Massarenti, he cried:

"That old man must live alone! He must be isolated. Any one of you who is seen with him in the street had better look out for trouble. I'll give him a taste of my whip!"

As soon as Veronica had left the room, we all gathered around Massarenti. He read in our eyes that the lieutenant's threat had failed to impress us. The very next day we went out in groups with our old friend under the eyes of the Fascist militia. Veronica gave no sign, but we felt that the atmosphere was charged with electricity.

Twenty-four hours later an order called us to Veronica's headquarters. We entered and were examined one by one. Morea was ahead of me, and on coming out he told me that Veronica re-

garded Abd-el-Krim's permit as such a suspicious document that he was going to send it to the Ministry of the Interior in Rome to be deciphered.

"It's very annoying," remarked Morea. "It was a nice souvenir of my trip."

When my turn came, the lieutenant handed me a sheet of paper he had found in my bag which contained a list of names and addresses of members of the Methodist Church in Rome. It had been in my bag when I was arrested.

"Who are these people?" asked Veronica. "They appear to be Freemasons."

"Oh no, Lieutenant, they are Protestants. They have nothing to do with politics."

"Protestants?" Veronica looked around as if seeking enlightenment from his officers. "Protestants?"

"Yes," I explained, "Protestants, that is to say, evangelists, my co-religionaries. I'm a Protestant."

"Ah, Protestants!" he yelled. "Very well,

very well, I understand. I shall transmit these addresses to Rome immediately. We'll teach those gentlemen to *protest!* They are all cowards and rogues."

I felt like striking him in the face, but he was protected by a dozen carabineers with fixed bayonets.

Two brothers, by name Ticconi, were next examined. Amongst their papers Veronica had seized a postcard from Rome bearing greetings and an illegible signature. It had already passed through the censor, but that made no difference. The brothers explained that the sender was a friend who had known them as children and had wished to show them that he had not forgotten them.

"What is his name?" screamed Veronica. "His name and address!"

"We shall never tell you that, Lieutenant," replied one of the brothers. "Our old friend doesn't mix up in politics, but if we give you his name and address he will get into trouble and

that would be a poor way of thanking him for his kindness."

"So you refuse to tell me his name? Well, we shall see."

Veronica made a sign to the carabineers standing behind him. They took hold of the brothers and held them fast.

"Will you tell me what I asked?"

"No, Lieutenant, never."

With a cruel swish, Veronica's heavy riding-crop descended on their faces cutting them to the bone.

"Will you tell me now?"

"No," cried the brothers, "never!"

Blows rained upon them until they were literally drenched with blood. When they finally returned to our prison room, they threw themselves down on their beds and wept with fury and indignation at having been compelled to submit to such an humiliation without any possible means of defending themselves. That evening we spent in grim silence, steeling our nerves for

the morrow, which might bring even worse trials.

From now on, every day witnessed fresh persecutions on Veronica's part. Picelli, member of Parliament from Parma, was walking at a fairly rapid pace through one of the alleys of the village, when he met a patrol. He was ordered to stop and taken to police headquarters. Here he found assembled a regular council of war: the police commissioner, the commander of the carabineers, and, of course, Veronica and his officers. They asked him why he had been "running."

"I wasn't running," he replied, "I was just walking quickly. I didn't know it was against the regulations."

"No," cried Veronica. "You were running, and running for some reason! Where were you going? Who was waiting for you? What had you to do? Answer! answer! or it will go hard with you."

The unfortunate Picelli did not know what to say. It seemed incredible that his persecutors should make a crime out of such a harmless mat-

ter. He tried to explain to them that he was merely walking quickly in order to take a little exercise. He assured them that nobody was waiting for him and that he was going nowhere in particular. But he could not make them believe it. They questioned him from four o'clock in the afternoon until nine at night, and finally let him go, evidently convinced that there was a mystery somewhere, and with a warning to "watch his step."

It became increasingly evident that we were in the power of a madman. Veronica showed all the symptoms of persecution mania, imagining plots and conspiracies everywhere, and he succeeded in convincing all the other officers and officials that we were dangerous people, liable to revolt at any moment unless we were kept down with an iron hand.

Conditions on the other islands were, in truth, not much better. News of them was brought us by Deputy Mucci, one of a batch of new deportees that arrived at Lampedusa about this

time. On the little isle of Tremiti, for instance, two hundred political prisoners were herded together in a concentration camp only five hundred metres square. At Favignana the authorities had issued an order compelling the deportees to give the so-called "Roman salute"—the Fascist form of greeting—to their jailors. The deportees refused, and many were arrested and beaten up.

News of this sort, added to our own sufferings, caused much indignation and excitement amongst us. There were heated debates as to what we should do to protect ourselves. Some advocated open resistance, saying that we should arm ourselves with stones and fall upon our tormentors. Calmer spirits counselled patience and self-control. Echoes of these conversations must have reached Lieutenant Veronica's ears, for one evening he made his appearance in our midst, accompanied, as usual, by a dozen carabineers.

"I have come to tell you that I'm not afraid of you," he began. "I've got you where I want you! You were sent here to serve your sentence,

and not to have a good time. I can promise you that you'll have a hell of a time. The Fascist Government is strong today and it crushes all its opponents.

"At the first sign of truculence," he yelled, rolling his eyes around, "I'll kill all of you! God grant that they make another attempt on the life of our beloved Duce! I am going to give a candle to the Virgin Mary to-night and ask her that it may come to pass. Then I shall come here with two good bombs and send you all together to Hell!"

His face was distorted with insane hatred. In silence we looked at that madman, on whose whims our lives depended. He turned his back on us and strode to the door, then suddenly sprang back and hit a young workman, named Forli, across the face with his whip.

"I'll teach you to laugh, you brigand!" he cried.

Forli, the meekest of men, was destined to a tragic end. When he had served his term of de-

portation he returned to his native village in the Romagna, where he was shot dead by the secretary of the local Fascio.

Lieutenant Veronica's amazing character was fully revealed to me shortly after when I was present at an interview between him and Ciccotti, my fellow exile. That afternoon I happened to enter one of the two miserable taverns that are pompously termed "cafés" on the island. It was situated close to the barracks of the Fascist militia. A large portrait of Mussolini hung on the wall, and above the bar, which was painted in red, white and green stripes—the Italian national colours—there was a huge Fascist emblem. The proprietor, also, sported the Fascist badge.

As I opened the door, I saw Sigfrido Ciccotti seated at one of the rickety tables with a cup of coffee in front of him. Before him was standing Lieutenant Veronica.

"You must realise, Ciccotti." Veronica was saying, "that Fascism is now absolute master of

Italy, and that you, its enemies, count for nothing."

"Our presence here certainly shows that Fascism is master of Italy," answered Ciccotti very calmly, "but it doesn't prove that we count for nothing; even in chains we can still hope."

"Don't deceive yourself. The time has passed when you could spread unhealthy ideas in the newspapers, hold meetings and provoke strikes. All that's over. He who accepts Fascism is saved: he who rejects it must perish."

"It isn't enough to call ideas unhealthy just because you don't share them, Lieutenant," retorted Ciccotti. "You must examine them. I am pleased to see that you condescend to speak to a deportee. Let's examine these questions together. There are no more strikes in Italy since the advent of Fascism, not because the workmen are contented and happy, but simply because they are afraid. They know that they will be sent to jail."

"That's enough," shouted Veronica. "You are delivering a lecture. Who asked you for it?"

"You," replied our friend, "in condescending to come and question me. So why are you angry now?"

"Enough," said Veronica, quivering with rage. "It is impossible to argue with you people. You are all too cultured and educated! I, for my part, am going to propose another method of settling our differences of opinion. Let's both go out into a field outside the village. I'll take off my uniform of an officer of the Fascist militia and we'll fight it out with our fists. Are you willing? I'm just longing to push your face in."

I and some of my friends, who had followed me into the café, listened with surprise and anxiety to this heated discussion. Was Veronica going quite mad? His face was crimson; he grasped his riding-crop nervously, looking at Ciccotti with an expression of intense hatred. We asked ourselves how the argument would end.

But we heard Ciccotti answer very coolly:

"I'm quite ready to fight you, although I don't see the necessity of it. But I accept under one condition, that my friends shall not be made to suffer if I knock you out."

Veronica was livid with fury. I saw him lifting his whip over Ciccotti's head.

But this time the whip did not descend. The lieutenant held it straight up in the air, like a symbol, and screamed:

"I understand. It isn't possible to challenge you, for you always make conditions and arguments. I'll never argue with you again. Here is Fascism"—he brandished his whip—"this is our power, our strength, our argument! This, and only this shall I use in future. Good-bye, Ciccotti," he added in a lower voice, "good-bye, renegade, son of a renegade."

I saw the poor young man turn pale at the insult. His father, a refugee in France, had been included by the Fascist Government in the list of citizens whom it had deprived of Italian

nationality. The law depriving Italians of their citizenship is one of the measures evolved by Mussolini for the "defence of the State."

So our days on the island passed, full of exciting incidents and evil forebodings. When we left our hut in the morning we never knew what was in store for us. We were not afraid, but we wanted very much to let our friends in Italy know of what was happening on the island. But how could we get in touch with them? The difficulties and risks were very great. Nevertheless, we succeeded.

One night, a friend called me aside. I won't reveal his real name; I shall call him Tomaso. He was one of the most intelligent and daring of my companions. He told me that he had found a safe way of corresponding with our friends in Italy.

At his suggestion, I wrote a detailed report of conditions on the island and the incidents that had taken place there. Two days later Tomaso took me to a secluded spot outside the village,

where we sat down and waited. Presently, I saw a man approaching us cautiously. He was neither a deportee nor a native of the island. I had noticed him for some days in the village streets and had remarked that he was greeted with marks of respect by the villagers. To my surprise, he shook hands with Tomaso most cordially.

"Sir," he said to me, "I have had the pleasure of knowing our friend for a long time, and I am very glad to be of use to him, and also to you."

We shook hands, and the stranger, glancing keenly about him, continued:

"By a curious chance, I happen to be spending a few days on this island, although I am neither a prisoner nor a policeman. Life is full of strange surprises. Whom should I meet on landing here but Tomaso? We were boys together. I had not seen him for more than twenty years. I am sorry to find him in such a desperate situation, but I am happy to be able to

help him. I shall do everything in my power to let the greatest possible number of people know what is happening here. Now give me the papers and let us separate. The slightest suspicion that might fall on me would be fatal."

Tomaso handed the stranger my report, which he put away carefully. Next day I saw him embark and leave unmolested for the mainland. My eyes followed him as he went up the gangplank, and I silently wished him a fair and speedy voyage. When the steamer's smoke vanished on the horizon I heaved a sigh of relief. Miraculously, we had broken through the wall of surveillance and censorship that hid our sufferings from the outside world.

That same evening I had a terrible shock, for about two hours after our return to our quarters Lieutenant Veronica entered with several officers of the militia. I imagined that all had been discovered.

Veronica seated himself at a table in the middle of the room, took out some papers, and

announced that he had been ordered to make out a report on every prisoner's conduct.

"I shall take them with me to Girgenti," he declared with much pride. "His Excellency the Prefect has called me there to report on you. Just think, your future depends on what I am writing down to-night! Only those among you who have behaved well and are ready to repent past errors can hope for clemency from the Duce."

We all looked at each other incredulously. Why was Veronica in such a hurry to fill in his reports? Why did he visit us thus at night, when he could have called us to his office in the daytime? We all crowded around the table to watch the new game this extraordinary man had invented. After pushing about his papers for a while, taking up cards and putting them away again, with a great show of activity and importance, he called one of us and began his questions:

"What is your profession?"

"Musician."

"Your political opinions?"

"Socialist."

"How many years of deportation?"

"Five."

"Good."

Veronica stared at the prisoner a moment, as if lost in thought. Then he made some signs on a paper before him, first in ink and then with a red and blue pencil. I happened to be standing just behind him and noticed that whenever he questioned a deportee, asking always the same questions, he made mysterious signs after his name—blue crosses, red triangles, series of exclamation marks and arrows. Sometimes he wrote a few words, such as "arch-criminal," "watch him," "very dangerous," "capable of anything," "obstinate enemy of the State." In some cases he added gross insults of the lowest description. He was indulging that evening in a sort of intellectual sadism, for he was perfectly well aware that we were reading everything

he wrote; indeed, he was writing it for our benefit!

An amusing incident occurred when he questioned Villani, a deportee from Molinella, a gigantic farmer, about six feet tall, with an immense black beard, who wore glasses and looked more like a professor than a country yokel. When Veronica asked him his profession Villani replied promptly:

"Peasant."

"Peasant? Impossible! You might be a landed proprietor."

"No, I'm a peasant, a field worker."

"You're trying to fool me. Or else that's just your modesty."

"Can't peasants be educated and intelligent like other men?"

"What schooling have you had?"

"As far as the third class."

"Of the secondary school?"

"No, elementary school."

"Go to the Devil!" shouted the Lieutenant.

"You're a —— sight better educated than I am. You're kidding me. Go to Hell!"

Veronica was not altogether wrong in this case, for although Villani had only attended three classes of the elementary school he had continued his studies later at night school, and was, in fact, probably a good deal more educated than the lieutenant.

When my turn came, Veronica, after asking the usual questions, added sarcastically:

"Here is the nephew of the great Nitti," alluding to my uncle, the former Prime Minister. I saw him make some cabalistic marks after my name.

To our great surprise we learned later from natives that Veronica had gone around the village boasting that he had staged this whole scene, mysterious marks and all, merely in order to frighten and impress us. Evidently he was not only a brute, but also a practical joker.

But the time was ripe for graver happenings. There seemed to be something in the air.

Tomaso and I were counting the days since the departure of our mysterious friend, and wondering whether he had delivered our message.

CHAPTER VIII

TO pass the time, and forget our troubles, we formed an amateur theatrical company and staged some plays and musical comedies. Some of the deportees had good voices and talent for acting, and we succeeded in putting on several really amusing shows that helped us to pass the long evenings. The audience was always in high good humour, loudly applauding the actors or hissing them unmercifully, as the case might be. One of our stars was Antonio Poce, a young man of gigantic stature and strength, the son of Mario Poce, a high dignitary of the Italian Freemasons. Antonio, in spite of his athletic build and by no means melodious voice, insisted on singing sentimental love songs. He never failed to bring down the house.

In order to vary our program, it was decided that one evening should be devoted to recitals in the Roman dialect, delivered by the Romans amongst us. Rome is very rich in dialect poetry, whose chief exponent is Giachino Belli. This poet flourished about eighty years ago, and his works are still extremely popular, as they are full of life and boisterous humour. That very year the Fascist government had undertaken to publish a new edition of his complete works. Belli lived in the days when the Pope was lord of Rome, and in his writings he held up to ridicule and contempt the oppressive measures of the Papal government. Pietro Rossi, one of our Roman comrades, was in the midst of reciting Belli's verses when he was interrupted by a wild yell:

"Stop, for God's sake! Stand still, all of you!"

I turned around and saw a scene worthy of the movies. In the doorway stood Lieutenant Veronica, his whip in one hand and a pistol in

the other. Behind him crowded his officers, the old, limping police commissioner, the commander of the carabineers, about twenty gendarmes and fifty men of the Fascist militia. I heard the commander of the carabineers shout, "Fix bayonets!" as he unsheathed his sword.

Veronica rushed headlong upon the unfortunate Rossi and struck him savagely. His men distributed blows and kicks among the audience. The lieutenant screamed:

"Hands up, all the Romans!"

All our friends who had taken part with Rossi in the Roman show were herded into a corner of the room. The rest of us were ordered to stand by our beds without moving. Defenceless, with their hands raised, the Romans were driven brutally out of the room by the carabineers. A war veteran, Baltazzi, who was still suffering from his wounds, had also held up his hands, although he had taken no part in the performance. The carabineers rushed upon him, but Veronica shouted:

"No, not him; leave him alone!"

Was it a vestige of chivalry in that madman's make-up? Baltazzi stared hard, in surprise, at our tormentor.

A few minutes ago the room had echoed with gay songs. Now it resounded with the rattle of arms on the stone floor and the rasping orders of officers to their men. Outside, in the dreary courtyard, enclosed by high walls, rang the steps of our comrades who had just been entertaining us with Roman humour. I looked out; the darkness was intense, although the sky was full of stars. After nightfall, Lampedusa is shrouded in complete obscurity.

Veronica's threatening voice roused me from my anxious thoughts.

"Out with you, too, Ciccotti," he cried, seizing the man whom he had challenged by the throat, "and off with that black tie!" He tore the tie off with such violence that Ciccotti was almost strangled.

Among the deportees who were arrested that

night was a young Roman whose name I withhold because he is now back in Italy. During the war he served as a sergeant in the same regiment in which Mussolini was a corporal. One day Mussolini became involved in a violent discussion with two soldiers, who reproached him with having advocated Italy's entry into the war after having at first been a socialist and pacifist. They were about to beat up the future dictator when the young sergeant intervened and saved Mussolini from their wrath. . . .

In all, about twenty deportees were taken out into the courtyard. Passing in front of me, Lieutenant Veronica muttered: "Look out, Nitti!" but he took no further notice of me. We heard the steps of our friends being marched off into the night.

When we were alone once more, we gazed at the score of empty cots and were filled with anxiety and fear. We recalled the practice of "decimation" applied to mutinous regiments during the war, when one man out of ten was

summarily sentenced to death and shot. We remembered Veronica's wish that an attempt might be made against Mussolini's life, which would give him a pretext to kill us. Had such an attempt been made? In that case, there was no hope. On that deserted island, isolated from all legal guarantees and public opinion, twenty men more or less counted for nothing.

Next morning we learned through a convict that our comrades had been incarcerated in the cells of the prison occupied by the criminal deportees. For a long time, the convict informed us, Veronica had been waiting for an opportunity to exercise his power and prove himself a saviour of the Fascist state. Quite innocently, we had given him a chance by our amateur theatricals. For several evenings he had listened to our songs and recitals outside the windows of our hut.

At last, on the night of January 14, just after we had begun our harmless performance, Veronica rushed to the police commissioner's house.

It was a little after nine o'clock, and the old man had only just finished his dinner and was stretched in an easy-chair, reading the newspaper to his wife. Veronica entered the room with the cry:

"To arms, commissioner! The deportees are singing songs of revolt in their quarters. They are threatening us with blood and murder. They are about to break out of their prison and escape to the interior of the island. I have seen through the windows that they have made themselves arms with the iron posters of their beds. We must act quickly to stifle the insurrection."

The shaky old commissioner, pale and distracted, hurriedly put on his uniform, grabbed a pistol and gave orders to alarm the garrison. Soon bugle calls and shouts of command rang out in the deserted village streets. The Fascist militia assembled in their barracks. The carabineers hurried at the double towards the scene of "revolt." It was as if the island had been attacked by a hostile army.

Afterwards, a council of war was held in the commissioner's office. Our twenty comrades, handcuffed, were subjected to a brief examination. They were informed that they were charged with "singing seditious songs" and organising an "armed revolt." Vainly they sought to explain the harmless nature of our diversions. They offered to sing the same songs before the commissioner and let him judge whether they presented any danger to the existing order.

It was useless. While the police commissioner, the commander of the carabineers and the other officers remained silent, Lieutenant Veronica shouted at the prisoners that it was useless to deny, that he had heard everything with his own ears and seen everything with his own eyes.

"You will be tried by the extraordinary tribunal as organisers of an armed revolt," he shrieked. "The penalty is from twenty to thirty years imprisonment."

Veronica was not exaggerating. Since November 1926 so-called extraordinary tribunals function in Italy. These courts are composed of officers of the Fascist militia and their sessions are held *in camera.* They have sentenced thousands of innocent persons to long terms of imprisonment for such offences as whistling an anti-Fascist tune, professing ideas contrary to the Fascist creed, or expressing the hope in public that Fascism might fall. Thus there was sufficient evidence to bring our friends to trial, although they were absolutely innocent.

Handcuffed and surrounded with glittering bayonets, our comrades were marched off to the common jail through the village, while the frightened fishermen and their wives stood on their doorsteps making the sign of the cross. They were put into a cell just large enough to hold them all as long as they remained standing. There was not enough room to sit or lie down. The place was in absolute darkness, but the carabineers kept a number of electric torches

playing upon the prisoners. At first they could not understand why, nor why their guards did not simply lock them up and leave them. All too soon, the mystery was explained.

Lieutenant Veronica's figure appeared in the doorway. He advanced towards the prisoners swinging his whip.

"Step forward, you who were reciting when I entered," he said slowly.

"It was I," replied a steady voice. And Pietro Rossi, the young Roman, stepped forward.

"Ah, it was you, you rogue! Now I'm going to teach you to recite poetry," yelled Veronica, taking Rossi by the throat and pushing him against the wall, while the carabineers kept his comrades back with their bayonets.

Veronica drew a dagger from his belt. The pointed, triangular blade flashed in the light of the electric torches held by the guards. He set the dagger on Rossi's breast.

"Cry long live Italy immediately, or I'll kill you," he said.

Rossi stared at his tormentor silently, without flinching.

"Cry long live Italy!" repeated the lieutenant, and pushed his blade into the flesh. Again and again he shouted his command, pressing the dagger more and more deeply into Rossi's breast. Blood began to flow from the wound, forming a dark pool on the stone flags.

Fainting, Rossi sank to the floor. His comrades saw him fall, powerless to help him. They started forward to raise him and staunch his wound, but the glittering ring of bayonets stopped them. In frenzied impotence, they witnessed a still more revolting scene.

At a word from Veronica, a soldier of the Fascist militia, a huge, muscular fellow, threw himself upon Rossi as he lay unconscious on the ground, trampling on him and kicking him in the face like an infuriated beast. At last he spat upon him.

So horrible was the scene that one of the carabineer officers, by no means a tender-hearted

man, called out to the brutal soldier to stop beating a man when he was down.

"I am in command here," yelled Veronica furiously and ordered the officer to keep his peace.

At last, the door of the cell was closed on the prisoners and they were left in absolute darkness. They groped their way to the spot where Rossi was lying in his blood and tied up his wounds with their handkerchiefs, but they had no water with which to wash them. After a few minutes Rossi regained his senses. He complained of acute pains all over the body. Blood continued to trickle from his mouth, leading his friends to fear that he had suffered some internal injury. They passed a tragic night. Only in the morning were they able to obtain some cotton-wool from one of the guards.

The excitement among all the political deportees on the island was at its highest pitch. Plans of open revolt were discussed amongst us. We all felt that the present state of affairs could

not continue and that it was preferable to risk the worst rather than endure Veronica's sadistic cruelty.

However, two days later, at nine o'clock in the morning, the little steamer that plies between the island and the Sicilian coast landed a tall, florid gentleman, garbed in formal black, who introduced himself to the surprised and dismayed tyrants of Lampedusa as a special police inspector sent from Rome to investigate conditions among the deportees. In a flash I realised that our letter, dispatched by the mysterious stranger, had reached its destination; news of our sufferings had spread to Italy and foreign countries, and the Fascist government, which tramples on all the rights of the Italian people, but is terribly afraid of having its tyranny revealed to the world, had become alarmed.

The inspector had arrived in the nick of time. He was informed as to what had happened on the island up to a few weeks before, but he knew nothing of Veronica's latest exploit. As soon as

he heard of it, he visited the cell where our friends were imprisoned, listened to their story and promised that justice should be done. He seized Rossi's blood-stained clothes and examined the prisoners one by one. Twenty-four hours after his arrival he ordered them to be set at liberty.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN the police inspector left for Rome a few days later, taking with him Rossi's blood-stained clothes and a full report on conditions in Lampedusa, he left behind him a disconcerted body of officers and officials, none of whom could imagine how the story of our sufferings could have reached the outside world. Their amazement was transformed into fear when a telegraphic order was received relieving Lieutenant Veronica of his functions on the island and recalling him to the mainland. Cursing and gnashing his teeth, Veronica packed his belongings, but he was now powerless to vent his rage on us.

Scarcely had Veronica departed, when a "seniore" of the Fascist militia landed. The Fascist militia is organised in imitation of the Roman

legions; a lieutenant is called a "decurion," a captain a "centurion," a major a "seniore" and a colonel a "consul." The eagle of the Cæsars decorates its standards and is a prominent feature on the uniforms and caps of the officers. Fascism attaches great importance to these emblems, which symbolise its belief that Italy is destined to revive in modern times the vanished glories of the Roman Empire.

The "seniore" came to our quarters and questioned us. There was a marked difference between him and Veronica. He was kind, smiling, polite, full of good words. We were astonished to hear him say:

"Undoubtedly, Veronica must have been mad. Gentlemen like you shouldn't be treated in such a way. We know that you are our opponents, but you are deserving of our respect. However this sad life of yours will soon be over. In a few months you will all be home again. For the Duce is good, the Duce understands, the Duce is magnanimous."

The Fascists call Mussolini the Duce, and he is thus termed in all the newspapers under government control.

We remained silent and answered only direct questions. The "seniore" left shortly afterwards. He gave orders that we should not be locked up in our quarters until eight o'clock in the evening instead of at five as heretofore, and to open two more windows in the walls of our prison. He promised better beds and kitchen utensils and greater liberty.

The "seniore" also announced that we should soon be inspected by His Excellency, the Prefect of Girgenti in Sicily. Since the advent of Fascism, the title of "Excellency" is in common use in Italy. All the ministers, under-secretaries of state, generals, admirals, judges and prefects are "excellencies." And the officials who have no right to the title claim it.

The good words of the "seniore" aroused no enthusiasm among us. More than two years later on the island of Lipari, I found a way to

recover my freedom. If I had counted on the Duce's "good heart," I should be there still.

Of all the actors in the tragic farce enacted on Lampedusa, His Excellency General Maggiotto, Prefect of the province of Girgenti, turned out to be the most grotesque.

Early one morning in February we saw a warship approaching the island. Climbing a rocky eminence, we soon made it out to be a destroyer. Entering the harbour, the vessel dropped a boat which landed at the pier an elderly gentleman with a patriarchal beard, ceremoniously attired in black. One of my friends recognised him.

"It's that madman Maggiotto," he exclaimed. "He was my colonel when I served in the Bersalieri, the crack corps of the Italian army, in Libya. Take my word for it, he's absolutely crazy."

There was a great commotion at the landing stage. His Excellency General Maggiotto, Prefect of Girgenti, found himself all alone on the pier with no one to receive him. The fishermen

gazed at him with curiosity, wondering who this old gentleman travelling on a warship might be. After a few minutes the commissioner, who had been delayed for some reason, appeared running down the road on his wavering legs, followed by a breathless crowd of officers, the commander of the carabineers, the mayor of the village and other local notables.

"What does this mean?" sputtered His Excellency, almost speechless with rage. "I, Maggiotto, a Fascist, Prefect of the province of Girgenti, general in the army, am kept waiting here on the pier by you gentlemen! Not one of you is present to assist me in getting out of the boat!"

General Maggiotto, who has since been pensioned and is no longer a prefect, was noted throughout Italy as an extraordinary and abnormal personality. He had spent most of his life in the army, training generations of recruits who spread his fame to all parts of the country. When he was captain in the Bergsalieri, he shot his

horse one day because it was a gift from his wife with whom he had just quarrelled. In Libya during the war between Italy and Turkey he used to shout through a megaphone all night to keep his men awake, depriving them of sleep until they were utterly worn out. Yet he was rather a comic than an evil figure, threatening terrible things but forgetting his threats quickly. Fascism exerted an irresistible fascination over his unbalanced, romantic temperament, and he became one of its most fanatical supporters. Appointed prefect of Romagna by Mussolini, he used to go out into the square in front of the government palace and gather a crowd of children around him at whose head he would march around a column that stood in the middle of the square, while the children cried, "Long live the prefect," and sang "Giovinezza," the Fascist hymn. Probably it was because of these exploits that Mussolini sent him to Sicily and made him prefect of Girgenti. And now this old lunatic had come to "inspect" us!

From our point of vantage on the rocks we could see Maggiotto gesticulating frantically and pulling wildly at his long white beard, surrounded by trembling and silent functionaries. Finally he started walking toward the village at a rapid pace. On the road he was met by more belated officers and officials, who likewise received solemn reprimands. In front of the church he encountered the village priest, who saluted him by taking off his wide-brimmed black hat. It was a fatal error.

"Brute of a priest!" shouted Maggiotto. "Don't you know that you must greet me with the Roman salute, by raising your right arm? Haven't you learned that yet?"

He left the old priest terrified and went into the village. His eyes scanned the windows of the houses.

"And the flags?" he groaned. "Where are the flags? Here is your prefect arriving, the direct representative of the Duce in your province, and you don't even hang out flags."

The frightened mayor hurriedly whispered orders to hang out all the flags that could be found.

In the meantime, we had been ordered to return to our hut. Excited policemen and soldiers pushed us inside and told us to prepare ourselves for a visit of "His Excellency." The poor old police commissioner rushed into the room, wringing his hands, and implored:

"I entreat you, gentlemen, now that the prefect is coming, to give him the Roman salute. I know you don't like this salute, I know, I know your ideas, but do it for me, don't ruin me!"

We smiled compassionately; we knew that not a man among us would ever greet a representative of the Fascist government with the Roman salute.

All of us stood at attention by our cots when the Prefect entered. Needless to say, nobody raised his arm to give the Fascist salute. Maggiotto began to pass a kind of review, stop-

ping occasionally to question one or another of us.

"You," he said to a deportee, "what was your occupation when you were at home?"

"Professor of music."

"Well, I hope you're not out of tune like the bugler of the militia who sounded 'attention' at my arrival. And you, what were you?"

"A barber."

"Good. We'll cut off the beards of our friends here, and their heads as well. And you, what are your opinions?"

"I am a socialist."

"A socialist! And so young! You might have waited until you had reached the age of Christ. Only then is a man ripe to have political opinions."

He stopped also in front of me.

"And you, why are you here?" he demanded.

"They brought me here," I replied.

"Why, what were you doing?"

"I was working in a bank."

"And why didn't you continue to work in a bank?"

"Because they arrested me and brought me here."

"Nobody goes to jail without a reason. Where there's smoke, there's fire."

These two popular Italian proverbs were all his philosophy. He passed along the line and stopped before Massarenti, our venerable comrade in misfortune. What a contrast there was between those two old men! Two mentalities, two different worlds confronted each other.

Maggiotto placed a fatherly hand on our friend's shoulder and asked:

"And you, who are you?"

"Massarenti."

"And what was your position?"

"I was mayor of Molinella."

"Poor old man," murmured Maggiotto. "At your age! But why those ideas—" And he stroked Massarenti's beard. "Good-bye, old man, good-bye."

After this incoherent discourse he ordered us all to assemble in the courtyard, as he wished to address us collectively. I will attempt to record his oration, as it is a perfect sample of Fascist rhetoric. He began like this:

"His Excellency, General Maggiotto, Prefect of Girgenti, has come to inspect Lampedusa.

"I am an old man and it has cost me a great sacrifice to undertake a rough sea voyage in a small warship. But it was my duty. You also are sons of the Fascist state, degenerate sons, yes, but sons. And therefore it was necessary that I should take an interest in your welfare.

"You are all of you mad. I can read madness in your faces. I have just heard some of you say, 'I am a socialist,' or 'I am a republican,' or 'I am a democrat.' What do all these words mean? Madness! Grow up first. Become big men, work hard, and then if you have any time left, interest yourself in ideas. For the present we should all of us have but one idea: subjection to the Duce who represents our country.

"We are not afraid of you. We are giving you a little vacation here in order that you may come to your senses.

"I am old, I have been in many battles and hope to be in more. I am not bad. And I'll prove it to you. Think of it, I am going to give your love and regards to your families and friends who are suffering through your fault. And I'll give your greetings to the Italian people who are by now all Fascists, guided by the Duce's iron hand. I invite you all to join me in the cry: Long live Italy!"

Not one of us raised his voice, but the officers and functionaries present shouted so loudly that they covered up our silence. However, Maggiotto's face became dark.

"Very well," he said harshly. "They who have shouted with me shall be saved, but the others are damned for ever."

Maggiotto then inspected the criminal deportees, to whom he addressed a similar discourse. He called them thieves, brigands, murderers. He

threatened them with terrible punishments and left them amazed and discontented.

During his short stay of a few hours on the island, Maggiotto gave us numerous proofs of his mental derangement. Wishing to visit the cemetery, for what reason nobody could imagine, he mounted a small donkey and galloped through the village streets with all the officers and officials running breathlessly after him, and most certainly hoping in the bottom of their hearts that he would break his neck. When he passed in front of the barracks of the Fascist militia, the sentinel presented arms. Maggiotto stopped the donkey and said:

"Sentinel, whom did you salute? Me or the donkey?"

Then he continued on his way.

Later he visited the elementary school where the school teacher, a young woman, made the children sing the Fascist hymn in his honour. But after the first few stanzas, Maggiotto interrupted them, yelling:

"Enough! These dirty brats sing horribly. You are all good for nothing."

Then he began to sing the hymn himself, beating the time. On leaving he remarked to the astonished teacher:

"What an honour this has been for you! Shaking hands with a prefect of the realm. Did you ever dream of such a thing?"

He insulted everybody, screamed at everybody, the police commissioner, the mayor, the secretary of the Fascio, the officers and officials. He treated all of them like worthless and dishonest rascals. Pointing to the ill-paved village streets, he asked the mayor:

"Where is the money the government sends you? Why don't you clean the streets? Have you eaten the money?"

On the pier when he finally embarked there were more strange scenes. A committee of natives brought him a present, a huge, beautiful white sponge in a box, a magnificent specimen found by the island fishermen. But

the Prefect did not receive it with much pleasure.

"What do you take me for?" he asked. "A cab cleaner?"

As he stepped into the boat, all the poor devils of functionaries whom he had harassed and heaped with insults for hours, obediently raised their arms in the Roman salute. Among them Maggiotto noticed the priest.

"Ah," he howled, "so you've learned how to salute, eh, brute of a priest!"

Such was His Excellency's farewell to the island placed under his administration.

However our days on Lampedusa were drawing to an end. At the end of February an order came from Rome dissolving the political convict colony on the island. In view of the unrest among the deportees and the proximity of the island to the African coast, the authorities considered it advisable to deport us elsewhere.

We were taken away in groups. One by one my friends left me, and soon our quarters were

half empty. Some of them were sent to Ustica, a little island near Palermo. At last my turn came and on March 6 I was informed that I was destined to spend the rest of my deportation term on the island of Lipari, together with my friend Umberto Pagani and ten others. On Monday, March 7, the ship arrived. Once more after an interval of three months, we were handcuffed and grasped our belongings with manacled hands.

About seventy deportees remained behind. As the boats rowed out to the ship, a spontaneous cry burst from our lips, a cry that expressed all our sufferings, our sacrifices and also our undying hopes:

"Long live Liberty!"

CHAPTER X

LIPARI, the "Isle of Winds," rose out of an azure sea before our weary eyes on the morning of March 15th, 1927.

It had taken us eight days to reach our new place of exile; eight days in chains, in prison cars and the dark holds of rolling steamers, and sleepless nights in filthy, vermin-infested cells of local jails. At Girgenti, in Sicily, Massarenti was separated from us, for he had been exiled to Ustica, another convict island.

The old man embraced us, saying mournfully:

"Good-bye, my friends. I am not saying *au revoir,* because I am almost certain we shall never meet again. I am old and ill, and I fear I shall not survive my five years of deportation. A grave in the island cemetery awaits me. But you, who are young, keep a stout heart; be faith-

ful to our ideals, for you will live to see better days."

Lipari is called the "Isle of Winds," because, in classical antiquity, it was regarded as the home of Æolus, King of the Winds. It still deserves its name today. Fierce winds sweep its volcanic surface day and night during many months of the year, in winter, autumn and the greater part of spring. The crumbling old houses of the town are shaken by continual blasts, and the wind howls mournfully at night through the narrow streets. On certain days the wind is so strong that the inhabitants cannot go out of doors. It whirls up blinding clouds of dust, that make progress almost impossible.

Nevertheless, Lipari seemed a kind of terrestrial paradise to me for the first few days after our arrival. After the desolate, sun-scorched landscape of Lampedusa, it appeared a land of enchantment, with its rich vegetation, fairly clean streets, shops, cafés and electric light. On the first landing, the vision of green hills, dotted with

little white cottages, enclosing the town in a wide semi-circle, delighted my eyes. But all this pleasure soon vanished as the grim realities of existence on Lipari were revealed.

Lipari is the largest of the Æolian Islands. It is about thirty miles in circuit and rises in two prominent volcanic peaks (Monte Chirica and Monte Sant' Angelo) to an altitude of nearly two thousand feet. Hot springs indicate its volcanic origin, and its most important exports are pumice stone and sulphur. It has about thirteen thousand inhabitants. Among the seven other islands of the group, Vulcano and Stromboli have active volcanoes.

Near the sea stands a frowning black castle, built by Charles V, the great Emperor, many hundreds of years ago. For centuries the entire life of the island was concentrated within its walls. Until a few years before our arrival the castle had been used as a place of detention for several hundred ordinary convicts, who had spread terror amongst the inhabitants. Murders,

robberies and brawls were daily events, and women were afraid to walk about the streets alone. In desperation, the population rose in revolt and an infuriated crowd of men and women, armed with pickaxes, shovels, spades and hatchets, attacked the castle, with the battle-cry: "No more convicts!" Warships and troops had to be sent to restore order. The citizens telegraphed to Gabriele d'Annunzio, the poet, believing that he would take an interest in Lipari, as the estwhile capital of Æolus, who plays such a great part in Homer's "Odyssey." D'Annunzio made one of his usual replies, full of sounding words signifying nothing.

However, the Government renounced its intention of sending more criminal convicts to the island and transformed it, instead, into a colony for political deportees. The inhabitants of Lipari welcomed the political prisoners with pleasure, knowing that they had nothing to fear from them.

"Ah! you political deportees are gentlemen,"

a citizen of Lipari remarked to me a few days after our arrival. "You have your opinions—which aren't the fashion just now—but, after all, you are honest, respectable people. I, also," he added, lowering his voice, "am one of you. . . . I am a faithful follower of Duke Colonna di Cesaro, the Sicilian Liberal Leader."

There is one church for every three hundred and fifty inhabitants on the island of Lipari. The people are very superstitious, like all southern Italians; the lower classes are absolutely fanatical. There are many convents and a multitude of priests, monks and nuns. A large part of the population consists of ex-convicts, criminals, who married girls of the island after serving their sentence. Many of them are police spies; some have opened stores, or work in the pumice quarries.

Steamers ply daily between Lipari and the mainland of Sicily. But the service is interrupted in stormy weather, and during the winter we were often four or five days without seeing a ship.

LIPARI, GRIM ISLAND OF IMPRISONMENT, SHOWING THE QUAY WITH MOUNT ROSA IN THE BACKGROUND.

On our arrival, we found about a hundred and fifty political deportees already on the island. There were among them many former members of the Italian Parliament: Giulio Volpi, of Rome, Andrea Beltrimini, of Como, Pietro Rabezzana, of Turin, Luigi Basso, Secretary of the Reformist Party, Binotti, of Genoa, and others. The list included a number of noted newspaper men of the Opposition Press, prominent lawyers, students, workmen and peasants.

Deportees who had enough money to pay rent were allowed to live in houses in the little town; the others were quartered in a large common cell in the castle. All the deportees had to be present in their quarters at 7.00 P.M. in winter and 9.00 P.M. in summer. Their movements were confined to a strictly limited zone, comprising the two principal streets of the town, the beach and a few country lanes. Towards the interior of the island a line of sentinels barred the way.

As is the case on all these islands, there was a

shortage of water. In the courtyard of every house there was a cistern destined to collect rain-water, but from the month of March until October it never rains in Lipari, and during this period water has to be brought in ships from Sicily.

We soon found that it was impossible to keep body and soul together on the island with our allowance of ten liras a day. Rents were very high; hovels of two or three rooms cost two or three hundred liras a month. The inhabitants were growing rich on the deportees. Even fruit, which is plentiful in all this region, was sold to us at an exorbitant price. In Lipari, as in Lampedusa, the natives laboured under the delusion that we were all wealthy and that they were justified in exploiting us. We had not been long on the island before many new stores were opened for our exclusive benefit. In reality, the majority of the deportees were practically without private means and many of them almost starved to death on their pitiful

allowance, in spite of the aid which their more fortunate comrades extended to them.

After long and wearisome formalities, a certain number of deportees were allowed to have their families come and join them on the island. Some of my companions sent for their wives and children, who had, in many cases, been left destitute when they were arrested, and tried to make a living as best they could. It wasn't easy. The pumice quarries—which represent the chief industry of the island—are situated at Canneto, which is out of bounds for the deportees, who are, consequently, not allowed to work in them. For a time, some of the deportees found work at the castle, which was undergoing repairs. Others worked as tailors or shoemakers in the town. Two or three of us had the good fortune to be employed at the electric power plant which supplied the town with light.

There was a great deal of misery among the deportees, many of whom had spent all their money in the weeks following their arrest and in

supporting their families while they were in jail. The children of the deportees were in a particularly pitiful situation. When I escaped from Lipari, there were about a hundred and twenty children of deportees on the island. Their parents were at their wits' end how to give them a decent education. They did not want to send them to the elementary schools on the island, because all schools in Italy are, today, mere factories of the Fascist mentality, in which the little boys are compelled to wear the black shirts of the "Balilla," and the little girls the dress of the "Piccole Italiane," and to chant the Fascist hymn on every occasion. Their parents preferred to keep them at home and teach them privately.

More than one large family lived in a single room in the basement of some dingy hovel, without air, water or light, and, often, without food. Many children were born on that hostile soil. Many fathers looked there, for the first time, on children that had been born to them while they were in prison.

A fine spirit of brotherhood reigned among the deportees. The rich and the poor, everyone who had a few liras to spare, gave freely to less fortunate comrades. But they had to exercise extreme caution in their generosity, for charity was not a virtue, but a crime, on Lipari. Any deportee who was discovered giving a few liras to a companion in distress was liable to immediate arrest and several years' imprisonment. The Fascist régime condemns any such distribution of money as an act emanating from the "Red Help," an organisation existing only in the imagination of the Fascist authorities. For instance, they seized a letter sent me by a friend in America, enclosing a twenty dollar bill. The money was confiscated and I was questioned at length regarding the sender and accused of entertaining "relations with American anti-Fascists."

In the first days of my sojourn on Lipari, I lived in a room in one of the three modest hotels which the town boasts, together with two other

deportees—Briglia, of Massa Carrara, and Baroni, of Modena. Briglia was very ill; he was a War cripple. We spent many sleepless nights nursing him. Baroni was a tall, athletic young man, simple and sincere. He had been a wood carver at Modena. He was a real artist in his own line. He had never committed any political crime, but his brother had been a Communist and had escaped across the Italian frontier. That was sufficient ground for Baroni's being sentenced to five years' deportation.

But my real life on Lipari, which I was to live for thirty weary months, began when I left the hotel and went to live with Pagani, my comrade in misfortune, and his family, in an old house in one of the narrowest and dirtiest alleys of the town. There I had a room of my own, which I furnished as best I could. I had a small bookcase made for my books and a wardrobe for my clothes. In this modest room I gathered around me a company of trusted friends, who, later, became known as the "Republican Family," be-

cause most of its original members were Republicans, such as Pagani, the master of the house, Guerrini, Taglia, Testa, Botturi, Morea and Briglia.

Guerrini had been an officer in the army during the War; he had been almost beaten to death by Black Shirts at Ravenna and lost the sight of one eye. He is in jail now, for, after the expiration of his term of deportation, he was again arrested on a charge of having "corresponded with political exiles abroad" and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. Taglia, of Genoa, had been a head waiter in leading European hotels. He knew most languages and was altogether a most cultured and interesting fellow. We at once put him in charge of our mess, which he managed with as much care and skill as if he had been working at the Ritz. Testa was a Roman workman, who spent his time studying French, physics and mathematics. Mario Botturi was the son of a high Post Office official. Thus, we formed a circle composed of all sorts and conditions of

men, taking our meals together and discussing vital problems of philosophy or science, in an attempt to forget—for a few hours, at least—that we were prisoners on an island guarded by hundreds of soldiers, every one of whom had the right to shoot us on sight if we overstepped the zone assigned to us by our masters.

CHAPTER XI

THERE were about five hundred political deportees and their families on the island of Lipari at the time of my escape. Their number, naturally, varied considerably in the course of the two long years I spent on the island. New deportees kept on arriving; some were transferred to other convict colonies.

Life on the "Isle of Winds," so far as I was concerned, was at first merely unbearably monotonous and sordid; its tragic aspect was to reveal itself to me later.

At seven o'clock every morning bugles called us out of our beds. At eight, we all assembled in the courtyard of the old castle for roll-call and distribution of ten liras—less than fifty cents—allotted daily to each deportee for his living expenses. A police sergeant, seated at a

table with a huge register before him, called our names in alphabetical order. Fascist militia and carabineers with loaded rifles were present to "preserve order."

During the roll-call we had to stand at attention and keep absolutely silent. It was an important function for the police, because it was their first opportunity of controlling the presence of all the deportees since the evening before.

Frequently, our paymaster was short of change. He used to give a fifty or hundred lira note to five or ten of us together, telling us to share it amongst us. Then we began a round of the stores in the town in order to get change. But the storekeepers were not always accommodating, and, often, poor fellows in urgent need of their ten liras to buy food for their starving families, were still wandering around the streets in search of change hours afterwards.

If, by chance, we arrived late for the morning roll-call, we were severely reprimanded. I remember I stayed in bed one morning, because

I had influenza. A few minutes after my absence had been noticed, a police officer appeared in my room, who was extremely solicitous regarding my health and only left me after assuring himself that I was really ill in bed.

After the morning roll-call we had the rest of the day to ourselves. At 7:30 P.M. in winter and at 8:30 P.M. in summer we had to be back in our rooms for the night. Patrols passed an hour later, entering all the houses inhabited by deportees and assuring themselves that no one was missing.

The arrival of the daily steamer from Sicily was the most important event in our lives. We were not allowed to approach the port beyond a certain limit during the hours of debarkation or embarkation, but we assisted at the interesting scene from a distance. Every passenger landing from the ship had to show his papers and give reason for his coming, for Lipari ranks as a military stronghold and a special permit from the Government is required to land there. The

natives, who have to go often to Sicily on business, are provided with identity cards.

Sometimes we saw only free passengers land from the steamer; but more often we heard the clank of chains and witnessed the arrival of fresh troops of deportees. When we glimpsed the white leather shoulder-belts of the carabineers glistening in the sun, we knew that new comrades were coming to swell our melancholy ranks.

"Here they are!" one of us would cry. "I can see six carabineers, so there must be three prisoners."

The prisoners, staggering under the weight of their chains and baggage, were marched to the town square, where we were at last allowed to welcome them. They all arrived with unshaven, straggling beards, like men saved from some dreadful shipwreck. Often we recognised old friends among them. Always they received a hearty welcome and were immediately invited to share our meals. There were men from all parts

of Italy among the deportees and all Italian dialects were spoken on the island, so newcomers almost invariably found friends, or, at least, countrymen who knew their friends.

There would ensue a dialogue of this sort:

"Where are you from?"

"From Bergamo."

"To what party do you belong?"

"The Democratic Party."

"What people do you know at Bergamo?"

"Professor Sarto and Doctor Pagelli."

"What is Sarto doing now? How is he?"

"He is at liberty, but under strict police surveillance. He asked me to tell Camondo, who was deported to Lipari some time ago, that he has stopped writing to him, because he feared to get him into more trouble. All his mail is opened by the police."

"I am Camondo," replied the questioner.

"Ah! then I have more to tell you. . . ."

And the two of them would walk away, arm-in-arm.

But sometimes we discovered that all the new deportees who proclaimed themselves friends of our friends were not genuine.

For instance, one day there arrived in a troop of deportees a slight, dark young man, who introduced himself as a Republican from Perugia.

We called one of our friends, who hailed from that city.

"He, a Republican?" exclaimed our friend. "He's an old Fascist. It was he who, with some others, broke into my house and beat up my brother because he would not tell him where I had concealed myself."

He went up to the young man and stared him in the face.

"Do you remember me?" he asked.

"No," stammered the other, flushing.

"Don't you remember the night of June 20th, 1922, when you came to my house with a score of Black Shirts? My name is Tittoni."

"No. You're mistaken . . . I am a Republican. . . ."

We all burst out laughing and left the miserable Fascist agent standing in the middle of the street.

As a rule, when these spies found that they had aroused our suspicions, they cast aside their disguise altogether and openly joined the Fascists on the island.

One day in May, 1927, news spread like wildfire among the deportees on the island that Domizio Torrigiani, Grand Master of the Italian Freemasons, had arrived in Lipari, sentenced to five years' deportation. We were all greatly excited, for Torrigiani was a man occupying such a prominent position that it seemed inconceivable that even Mussolini would dare to send him to a convict colony.

All the military and police authorities turned out on the quay when he landed. He was a tall, robust man of fifty, with a strong, open face, framed in a pointed beard that was turning grey. He walked at a rapid pace, followed by detectives and policemen. He was not hand-

cuffed. By a special order, he had been allowed to travel in a private compartment on the trains at his own expense. The journey to Lipari had cost him three or four thousand liras. However, he had spent many days of suffering in the Roman prisons before his deportation.

The Grand Master aroused great curiosity among the inhabitants of the town as he strode through the streets. All the citizens ran to their windows, balconies and doors as he passed; gesticulating groups formed in the streets and everyone gazed with interest and awe on the "magician," the mysterious chief of that "occult society" known as Freemasons.

"So this is the famous Grand Master," the simple and deluded island folk whispered, "the enemy of God and of the State! This is the supreme Head of the Secret Association of Blasphemers and Unbelievers, whom our priest calls the twin-brother of Satan!"

Torrigiani soon won our esteem by the dignity and courage with which he faced the sufferings

which he shared with us. I had met him before at Masonic Meetings.

The island authorities evidently had orders to treat him with courtesy, but also to watch his movements even more closely than those of other deportees. He was allowed to rent a spacious house, standing in a pretty garden, but two detectives were assigned to his person and never left him, night or day. Before the gate, two soldiers of the Fascist militia, armed with rifles, mounted guard, and in the garden itself were detectives, while carabineers watched the back of the house.

What did the authorities fear? Apparently, they were afraid that the Grand Master, by virtue of his high office and of the international solidarity existing between Freemasons all over the world, might make his escape with foreign help. Obsessed by this apprehension, they made his life unbearable.

When I called on him, I was stopped and questioned by his guards, as though I had been

an outsider and not myself a deportee on the island. The names of all the deportees who came to see him were noted down by the detectives, and soon it became apparent that all his friends had been put on the "black list" by the authorities.

We invited the Grand Master to dinner one day at our "mess" and he proved excellent company. At the end of the repast, one of our comrades, named Passardi, a barber from Rimini, a fellow full of temperament and an ardent Republican, proposed his health in simple and sincere words, such as the common people in Italy are wont to use. I could see that Torrigiani was deeply affected by this homely tribute.

Passardi had amassed a small fortune in his native town through hard, honest work. He was a member of the Republican Society called "Antonio Fratti," to which Arnaldo Mussolini —brother of the "Duce"—had formerly belonged, in the days when the latter also was a red Revolutionist. In 1925, without any valid

reason, Passardi was charged with having plotted against the life of the "Duce." He was arrested and kept in jail for a year. There was no evidence against him, so he had to be acquitted of this charge, but, instead of being set at liberty, he was sentenced to five years' deportation, with the usual result that his business was ruined and his family plunged into misery. After a while, he was permitted to open a small barber shop at Lipari and his scant earnings went to support his wife and children.

In the course of 1927, I saw many other deportees arrive, some from other islands, but more from prisons in Italy, which were still overcrowded. Bruno, the lawyer, who had been my companion on Lampedusa, arrived from the island of Ustica, with Mario Razzini, editor of a Republican newspaper. From the mainland came Chirici, a War veteran with many medals for bravery in battle, and Bruno Massi, who had been attached to the Ministry of the Interior during Premier Nitti's term of office.

We were allowed to read the Italian newspapers, but they afforded us scant consolation, for none but the Fascist Press exists in Italy today. All Opposition papers, whether Republican, Democratic, Catholic or Socialist, have been suppressed by the Government. The Press censorship is a permanent institution. Mussolini himself appoints or dismisses the editors of the great newspapers, as the fancy takes him. In order to find work on a newspaper, journalists must be *persona grata* with the Fascist authorities.

The natural consequence of this suppression of the freedom of the Press is that Italian newspapers are no longer interesting. They all say exactly the same things and when you have read one, you have read them all. They rarely mention the King, but there are always three or four columns of panegyrics about the "Duce," his great achievements and incomparable genius. Pictures show him on foot, on horseback, in airplanes, automobiles and warships, in military

uniform, and even in the garb of a Roman emperor. He is depicted in all conceivable attitudes, praying, playing the violin, sowing grain in the fields, reviewing troops, making speeches. No cinema star has ever had more pictorial publicity. As a matter of fact, there is a special staff of officials in Rome whose job it is to distribute photographs of the "Duce" all over the country.

All the newspapers have been compelled to adopt a stereotype policy, which consists in exalting the "Duce" and all his works, and lauding Fascism, which has transformed Italy into a strong, warlike country and is paving the way for the resurrection of the Roman Empire. France is represented as a degenerate, moribund nation; the British Empire is falling to pieces; and Americans are ignorant and brutal barbarians. These statements are repeated day after day and dinned into the ears of the Italian people.

Owing to the ruthless censorship, people in

one part of Italy have no idea what is going on in other parts. What happens in Milan is never known in Palermo, and events in Turin remain a mystery for the inhabitants of Naples. We, on our lonely island, had more accurate and complete news of happenings in Italy, through newly arrived prisoners, than Italian newspaper readers. And the news they brought us was ever the same: oppression, misery, unemployment, terror, arrests, deportations, bloodshed.

I recollect that one day there appeared among us a young man from Calabria who was almost blind. He was a naturalised American citizen. While serving in the American Army during the War, he had been badly gassed and had nearly lost his eyesight in consequence. He was receiving a pension from the United States Government as an American War veteran.

"But how did you come to be deported?" we asked in amazement.

"I returned to Italy a few years after the War," he explained, "wishing to revisit my

mother and home in Calabria. I had never belonged to any political party, but when the Black Shirts began exercising their Reign of Terror in my native village, I and some friends tried to oppose them. Finally, I had to seek refuge in the mountains, abandoning my wife, whom I had married in America, and my young children. After months of misery, I was arrested and sentenced to deportation to the island of Favignana, where the prisoners were brutally mistreated by the Fascist guards. The Fascist authorities had refused to recognise my American citizenship, affirming that I was an Italian because I had been born in Italy. I appealed to the American Embassy in Rome and was informed that they were willing to undertake steps for my liberation, but that if I were set free, I should immediately be expelled from Italy as an undesirable alien. That meant leaving my mother, my wife and my children behind me, so I decided that it was preferable to serve my sentence. We are, at least, living in the same country. The

authorities would never allow my old mother to join me in America, and it is very doubtful whether they would grant a visa to my wife and children."

Our companion's fears were well founded, for the Fascist Government thinks nothing of overriding international law where persons, born in Italy, are concerned, whether they are naturalised in other countries or not. The first duty of every Italian, according to Mussolini, is to remain in Italy. If he finds work in a foreign country, so much the worse for him. His family must stay behind in Italy. If he wants to see them, he must come back, and if he comes back, he is not let out again.

On rare occasions some foreign newspapers used to find their way to Lipari. Many of the deportees knew English, French or German, and the papers were eagerly scanned for news from Italy. Alas, nearly all of it was coloured and distorted. The Fascist Government has many ways of filling the foreign Press with

propaganda. Like all despotic Governments, Fascism is very sensitive regarding foreign opinion, and exerts every effort to conceal the true character of its rule. The system is the same as in Soviet Russia, which, in many other respects also, so closely resembles the Fascist state: foreign correspondents who try to investigate independently and tell the truth are expelled, and the others have no other source of information than the Government and the Press, which is run by the Government.

Thus, even America seldom hears the truth about Italy.

CHAPTER XII

OMINOUS news from other convict islands reached us at that time, causing alarm and indignation in our ranks.

It was brought by deportees who had been transferred to Lipari from the little isle of Ustica, to which so many of my friends had been exiled.

Among the deportees at Ustica was General Roberto Bencivenga, one of Italy's most notable soldiers. During the War he had been chief of staff to General Cadorna, the Commander-in-Chief of the Italian armies. After the War he was elected to Parliament as a deputy for Naples. He joined the Liberal Party and opposed Fascism in Parliament and in the Press with the same courage and energy he had dis-

played on the field of battle. In December, 1926, his house in Rome was sacked by Fascist militia, and he was "warned" by the authorities that he was "giving cause for suspicion," the usual prelude to arrest. Soon afterwards he was deported to Ustica, where he found the deportees living under terrible conditions of oppression and mistreatment.

The island of Ustica is only about three kilometres in length and its greatest width is one kilometre. In spite of its small area, the zone assigned to the political deportees, of whom there were about three hundred, was extremely limited. They were cooped up in the central part of the island in a village inhabited by fishermen, and compelled to live in constant proximity with five hundred ordinary convicts, many of whom were dangerous criminals.

The deportees were terrorised by another Veronica, a lieutenant of the Fascist militia named Guasco. They nicknamed him "Cocaine" after the drug to which he was addicted.

He insulted them and beat them up on the slightest pretext.

In August, 1927, one of the deportees on the island of Ustica, by name Spartaco Stagnetti, was stabbed to death by a convict. Stagnetti had opened a little tavern, where he provided meals at a low price for his comrades. He was thus able to save a little money with which he supported his wife and five children in distant Italy. He was generous and good-hearted. He took one of the ordinary convicts into his service. But one day he surprised this man in the act of robbing him and was compelled to discharge him. That same evening the convict returned, crazed with drink, and drove a stiletto through Stagnetti's heart. The murderer was arrested during the night and sent to Palermo.

The morning after the crime a delegation of deportees waited upon the Governor of the island and asked him to forward to the Minister of the Interior a telegram describing the tragedy

and protesting against the custom of compelling political prisoners to live together with criminal convicts. At the same time they asked permission to accompany Stagnetti's body to the cemetery.

At first the Governor promised to fulfil both requests. But when he saw the deportees gathering with their families in the village square in order to follow the coffin, he grew alarmed. He called the deportees who had signed the telegram and told them it had been sent to Palermo, where the authorities would decide if it should be forwarded to Rome. But he withdrew his permission for the deportees to attend their comrade's funeral.

The deportees were not even allowed to line the streets through which the coffin passed, and the poor wreath of field flowers which they had made to put on Stagnetti's grave was taken away from them and destroyed by the soldiers.

In the dead of night, when all the deportees were required to be in their houses, eight con-

victs, companions of the murderer, bore the coffin on their shoulders to the cemetery. The macabre procession was lighted by torches flickering in the wind and detachments of Fascist militia, heavily armed, opened and closed the march.

As a sign of protest, the only one in their power, the deportees remained indoors for twenty-four hours. This silent manifestation made a deep impression on all the islanders, and even on many of the convicts who condemned their companion's act, but it infuriated Lieutenant "Cocaine."

"I'll be the next to kill one of you," he threatened.

Not long afterwards about sixty deportees were arrested in the middle of the night in their rooms, handcuffed and loaded with chains and transported to Palermo, charged with having "plotted against the State." Lieutenant Guasco had staged this "plot" with the help of stool pigeons. All the political convict colonies are

full of such spies, who are recruited among what are called "dissident Fascists", that is to say, Black Shirts sentenced to deportation for common crimes, offences against party discipline or quarrels with their superiors. They were dangerous and uncouth individuals, ready to do anything in order to be restored to favour.

There were a number of these dissident Fascists at Lipari, among them the notorious Captain Tonti of Perugia. He had been one of the first Fascists in Umbria, and from 1919 to 1922 had commanded a company of Black Shirts that called itself "La Disperatissima"—the "Desperate Ones." These Black Shirt companies of the early days of Fascism gave themselves the most ferocious names. I remember: "I Diavoli Rossi"—the "Red Devils"; "I Diavoli Neri"—the "Black Devils"; and "Me Ne Frego"—"Nothing frightens me." In three years they committed innumerable crimes, murdering peaceful citizens, setting fire to their homes and outraging women.

These companies were dissolved in 1922, and most of their members were incorporated in the Fascist militia. Such was the case with Captain Tonti, but for some act of insubordination he was finally deprived of his rank and deported. Although we tried our best to keep him at a distance, he used to pester us on every occasion with the story of his wrongs.

"Here I am," he used to say, "after all I have done for the swine who are now in power! Believe me, I regret all the wicked acts I ever committed against the opponents of Fascism. They used to make us drunk before sending us out to attack you. They made brutes out of us. But now I realise that our great leaders were all rogues and rascals."

We knew that he was insincere and secretly in the service of the police.

It was the same thing at Ustica. That island also swarmed with dissident Fascists. There was there a certain Canovi, a Fascist *agent pro-*

vocateur who had been active in France among Italian political refugees, a former communist called Perella, who had turned Fascist, Ugo Bassi of Parma, noted for his cruelty while he served in the Fascist militia. These desperate men framed a statement charging the political deportees with planning a revolt to gain possession of the island and with poisoning the wells from which the soldiers and police drew their drinking water.

The deportees arrested in consequence of this "conspiracy" remained nine months in the putrid cells of the prison at Palermo. They were eventually liberated, as it was impossible to prove anything against them, but the spies had achieved their ends, for most of the latter were pardoned by the Government and allowed to return to Italy.

Scarcely had this bad news from Ustica reached us, when Lipari was the scene of a similar frame-up.

With the formal permission of the police

authorities, we had organised a school and library on the island for the deportees and their families. We had elementary and secondary courses in English, French, German, Spanish, history, mathematics, physics and drawing. The Grand Master of the Italian Freemasons, Torrigiani, gave a course on Italian literature; Professor Tega taught French; Micehagnoti, a Tuscan who had been educated in England, was our English teacher; Deputy Grossi lectured on mathematics, and I myself on history. We rented a large room and had benches and tables made by the artisans among us. My class, I remember, was composed of about fifty men of the working classes, all full of zeal and eager for knowledge.

But we had amongst us a Judas, a certain Cocco, a man of weak character who had only recently arrived at Lipari. Hoping to regain his freedom, he allowed himself to be persuaded to denounce our school as a place where, under the pretext of teaching, political discussions were

held and the deportees inoculated with hatred against the State, preparatory to the organisation of an armed revolt.

On the morning of December 2, I was awakened early by Pagani, who rushed into my room announcing:

"They are arresting all our friends!"

I hurried out with him. In the port lay a strange ship, which had just landed a strong detachment of military police from Messina. We soon learned what had occurred.

At four in the morning, patrols had gone from house to house, making in all about two hundred arrests. The raid was still in progress, and I met many friends being marched through the streets of the town, handcuffed and escorted by soldiers. I expected every moment to be arrested myself. Several times I was stopped and asked to give my name, but after consulting their lists the soldiers allowed me to continue on my way. It was nine o'clock in the morning before the raid was over.

The prisoners were crammed into the tiny jail of Lipari, which was far too small to hold all of them. So some were imprisoned in a building near the cemetery. This was later the scene of a macabre tragi-comedy, which was related to us afterwards by Passardi, one of the habitués of our "mess."

I was fast asleep in the quarters I shared with my friend Agostini [he narrated], when I was awakened by heavy thuds on the door. A sergeant of carabineers entered, followed by six of his men. They assured themselves of our identity and ordered us to dress. We were handcuffed and taken out into the street. It was still quite dark and very cold. Everywhere we saw armed patrols and detectives. We arrived at the castle in front of the barracks of the Fascist militia; several grave gentlemen in black were seated at a big table surrounded by officers and officials. The table was covered with papers and registers. Commands rang out, arms rattled. It was like the headquarters of an army in the midst of a decisive battle.

When Agostini and I were brought before the gentlemen at the table, among whom was the Governor of the island they whispered together for some minutes.

At last the Governor gave the order: "Passardi and Agostini, to the cemetery!"

The carabineers ordered us to face about and we descended the steep steps leading down from the castle. Neither Agostini nor I could imagine why we were being taken to the cemetery. We met some islanders who were going to attend mass in the chapel of the castle. Our guards ordered them to retrace their steps, saying harshly, "This isn't a morning to go to church." The islanders turned back, staring at us with apprehension and mumbling prayers.

The only logical conclusion I could come to was that we were being taken to the cemetery to be shot. In imagination I could see open graves yawning for us. I addressed myself to the sergeant:

"Sergeant, surely we shall be allowed to write a few lines of farewell to our families?"

"Lines of farewell? What for?"

"You don't mean to say we are going to be shot without being able to bid them a last goodbye?"

"Shot?" The sergeant burst out laughing. "What made you think that? We are simply taking you to a building near the cemetery because there is no more room in the jail."

Passardi's story became famous not only at

Lipari but on all the other convict islands. Even the Governor, when he heard of it, ordered Passardi to appear before him and made him relate the tale amid roars of laughter. But, as a matter of fact, many deportees who were arrested that morning believed that their last hour had struck, for it must be remembered that we had good reason to know that the power of our jailors was practically unlimited and that our lives were in their hands.

The prisoners remained in confinement for three days. Then some of them, including Passardi, were released, but about fifty others were deferred to the extraordinary tribunals in Italy, charged with fomenting a plot against the State. Cocco, the false comrade whose cowardice had brought this misfortune upon us, disappeared from the island.

Loaded with chains, our unfortunate friends left us with the cry, "Long live Liberty," in which we heartily joined, despite the efforts of the soldiers to drive us away.

In the midst of these melancholy events my heart was cheered by the arrival at Lipari of the two faithful and brave comrades who were destined to share in the perils and final success of my escape: Emilio Lussu, lawyer and Member of Parliament for Sardinia, and Professor Carlo Rosselli. Lussu had spent thirteen months in the dark prison cells of Cagliari, and Rosselli ten months in the jail of Savona. I never dreamed on that dismal November morning, when I noticed Lussu, a tall, thin man with bold features and fearless eyes, landing on the quay in the midst of a squad of carabineers, that he would be my companion in the most desperate adventure of my life. Nor did I imagine, the first time I met Rosselli, with his open honest face and smiling blue eyes behind sparkling glasses, that he was designated to help me regain my freedom.

CHAPTER XIII

THE year 1927 was drawing to a close. Christmas was coming and an intolerable weariness took possession of me at the thought that I was doomed to dwell more than four years longer on that island of gloom and misery, with nothing to break the monotony of existence but the daily roll-calls, the arrival of the steamers with new deportees, the distribution of the mail. During the summer months we were allowed to bathe in the sea, but armed guards on the beach and in boats saw to it that we did not swim out more than a hundred yards from the shore. In the winter even this pleasure was denied us; it rained continually for months on end and we stayed in our houses, waiting for night when we could forget our despair in sleep.

Half an hour after bedtime two bugle calls were sounded and patrols entered every house occupied by deportees to verify their presence. After that we were disturbed no more till morning and another day began, an exact repetition of the last.

I tried vainly to kill the time by reading, studying and giving lessons to other deportees, but gradually I lost all interest in intellectual pursuits. Often I found myself sitting with a book before me without any idea of what I had been reading. The pleasure I had always found in reading was gone. I could no longer concentrate my thoughts on study. The degrading idle life on the island had dried up my faculties, for the sense of freedom was lacking. I passed some anxious moments when I seemed to feel my reason deserting me.

Slowly, like a ray of light piercing the darkness of a prison cell, an idea sank into my soul, the thought growing to certitude, that I must reconquer liberty at all costs, break my chains

and save myself from the poisonous, lethargic influence of that isolated, unfree existence.

The thought of an escape became an obsession. I lulled myself to sleep with it; I dreamed of it; I awoke with the hope and despair of it. Months passed, long months, before it assumed definite shape, before any possibility of its realisation presented itself, but it never left me from that time onward.

At Christmas the Fascist Government, to demonstrate its generosity and convince foreign opinion that it had no fear of the "miserable remnants of opposition," announced that the Duce, in the goodness of his "fatherly heart," had pardoned hundreds of political prisoners. The obedient Press lauded his magnanimity to the skies and drew touching pictures of deportees returning to spend Christmas at their firesides.

I witnessed the departure of a small contingent of "pardoned deportees" from Lipari. They were about sixty in number. Of these,

only about ten were genuine anti-Fascists. Among them was a dear friend of mine, Botturi, sentenced to five years' deportation like myself, and now liberated after but one year on the island.

But how had his liberation been effected? Through incessant supplications on the part of his father, a Fascist and high Government official, who had bombarded the Duce with petitions, begging him to pardon his "degenerate son," the "shame of his family." My friend, who would have died rather than ask forgiveness of Mussolini, received the news of his liberation like a condemned man ordered to prepare for the gallows. He gazed at us, pale as death, with tears in his eyes. He spent his last days among us in absolute silence, only muttering from time to time:

"Whoever asked my father to meddle in my affairs? What right has he to ask Mussolini to pardon me?"

Botturi left Lipari without hope of happiness

or real liberty. His "pardon" was conditional, as in all such cases, on his "behaving himself" for two years, that is to say, he was placed under strict police surveillance in his native town.

The other fifty prisoners who had been "pardoned" were poor devils deported to the island for reasons quite foreign to politics or on the most futile pretexts. One of them named Monticelli, who had been a juggler at country fairs, had been sentenced to deportation because he had once delivered a comic address in dialect about Mussolini, to the great amusement of the village yokels. Monticelli didn't want to leave Lipari, saying that he would never be able to get ten liras a day anywhere else for doing nothing and that he would starve to death in Italy. He was put on the ship by force.

Two young Roman workmen who were likewise pardoned had been deported because they had taken off their hats to the Red Flag floating from the Soviet Embassy in the Via Gaeta in Rome. But the most curious and characteristic

case was that of a poor, half-demented peasant from the province of Veneto, who owed his deportation to a naïve attempt to render homage to the Duce.

The old fellow, while drinking in a village inn, had made disrespectful remarks about Mussolini. He was at once arrested and given ten months in jail. When he had served his sentence he conceived a crazy idea of expiating his "crime." He filled a barrel with water from the Piave River, on whose banks the Italian Army covered itself with glory during the War, placed the barrel on a wheelbarrow and set off on foot for Rome, like the pilgrims of the Middle Ages, to present it personally to the Duce and obtain his forgiveness.

It took him about two months to reach the Eternal City. On his way he presented himself to the Fascist authorities in all the places through which he passed, explaining his mission. They gave him assistance and a little money. But it isn't easy to enter Rome today. At the

Porta del Popolo he was stopped by the police. The barrel of Piave water was seized, the wheelbarrow confiscated, and the fantastic old pilgrim cast into prison. An investigation was made in his native village; it was learned that he had been sentenced for offending the Duce; and he was deported for five years on a charge of having contemplated an attempt on Mussolini's life under the pretext of approaching his person to render him homage! The poor old fellow was quite mad when I met him at Lipari, absolutely bewildered by the misfortune that had overtaken him when he had expected honours and rewards for his act of devotion to the Dictator.

In a few cases the sentences of deportees were reduced from five to three years. I was not granted any reduction, and my conviction grew that I should have to serve my full sentence on the island.

There were only two ways for deportees to regain their liberty: submission to the Fascist Government or escape.

The Government welcomes all acts of submission on the part of political prisoners; it encourages and seeks to provoke them in every possible way. Frequently I was approached by more or less secret agents of Fascism on the island. Why didn't I just write a few words, they suggested, declaring that I would no longer interest myself in politics and that I had come to recognise that the Fascist régime was Italy's salvation? Nothing more was necessary, they assured me, to achieve immediate release.

I knew well what would have happened had I succumbed to these temptations. My act of submission would have been published triumphantly in all the newspapers. It would have been cabled to foreign countries. The surrender of an enemy! There is nothing that Fascism knows better how to exploit for purposes of propaganda.

The Fascist authorities employ the most unscrupulous methods to compel or persuade the parents, wives or children of deportees to urge

political prisoners to make this act of submission. Alternately, they flatter or frighten them, play upon their hopes and desires.

"Tell your son to write *something*, and we shall have him released," they whisper. "All he has to do is to say that the Duce has saved Italy and that Fascism is the only true creed and he will return to you immediately. Why should he plunge you into misery through his obstinacy?"

Hundreds of times I have heard relatives of deportees repeat words like these, which had been whispered in their ears by Fascist officials. The prisoner who wishes to rejoin his family, to dry his wife's tears or comfort his old mother, is required to debase himself, to become a renegade and a traitor to the cause for which he suffered.

The only other way, the only honourable way to reconquer freedom was to escape. It was difficult, dangerous, almost impossible, but I decided to risk everything in the attempt.

Somehow from the first it seemed natural to confide my dreams of escape to Emilio Lussu

and Carlo Rosselli, my two new comrades. What I knew of their past inspired me with unlimited confidence in their courage and fidelity. I read in their eyes the same spirit of resolution that filled my heart; I felt that they were both men of iron will and steadfastness.

Emilio Lussu was the sort of man one imagines the knights of old to have been. His active life had been dominated by high ideals. While studying for the law, he had been called to serve in the army. He was an officer in the infantry for eight years. When Italy entered the war, he was at the Front with the 151st Regiment of Infantry, belonging to the famous Sassari Brigade composed of Sardinians noted for their bravery. Lussu himself was a Sardinian by birth, and he had all the romantic and chivalrous characteristics that distinguish his countrymen. He was a fearless horseman and passionately fond of all athletic sports. He was greatly loved by his men and respected by his superiors. His valour was proverbial in the Brigade.

Several times wounded, and decorated with four medals for bravery in the field, Lussu left the army with the rank of captain after the War, in which he had fought with the conviction that he was defending a noble and just cause.

Lussu returned to Sardinia and there founded the "Sardinian Party of Action," with a program of liberty, democracy and social justice—ideals that had been proclaimed on many occasions by the country's leaders during the War. Many ex-service men joined this organisation whose members were recruited among all classes of the people. Lussu declared himself resolutely opposed to any kind of dictatorship.

Fascism saw in the new party an enemy and set about to destroy it. At a political meeting a Fascist agent fired a shot at Lussu, who was wounded but recovered. In 1921, and again in 1924, he was elected a member of Parliament and he continued to fight for his political ideals in the Chamber of Deputies. The Fascists hated

him as their most dangerous opponent in Sardinia.

On the night of October 31, 1926, immediately after the attempt on the Duce's life at Bologna, programs against all anti-Fascists were ordered by the Fascist authorities in all Italian cities. Scenes of terror were enacted in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence and Turin, under the complacent eyes and protection of the police. Lussu was at Cagliari. He was warned that it had been decided at a meeting held at the Government Palace in the presence of the Prefect and the highest officials of the province, to sack his residence and murder him. His friends urged him to fly and hide himself in the mountains where he would have been safe among his numerous adherents. He refused, bade farewell to his friends, and waited calmly in his house.

Soon a wild crowd of Black Shirts, shouting and singing, came surging down the street, headed by the Fascist deputy Cao, now one of

Mussolini's Under-Secretaries of State. They were screaming, "Death to Lussu! Tear him in pieces!"

Lussu armed himself with a rifle and went to a window opening on the balcony of the house. Having found the doors stronger than they had expected, some Black Shirts were trying to climb up the balcony. As the head of the leader appeared over the balustrade, Lussu fired. His assailant fell backwards into the street below, mortally wounded.

Instantly, the Black Shirts fled in all directions in a wild panic. But now the police intervened and occupied the street. The Police Commissioner of Cagliari summoned Lussu to let him enter, and the latter, after stipulating that he should not be delivered to the Black Shirts, surrendered.

Lussu spent a year in jail at Cagliari awaiting trial. Mussolini wished to see him sentenced to life-long imprisonment, but the courts, significantly enough, decided that there was insufficient

ground to proceed against him, as he had acted "in a state of legitimate defence." The magistrates had in this instance given way to the pressure of public opinion, which was almost unanimously in Lussu's favour.

Thus, in spite of Mussolini's orders, Lussu was acquitted. But he was not set free. The Duce, now acting by virtue of the powers given him by the new laws enacted for the "defence of the State," had him deported for five years to Lipari.

Such was Lussu's history. Carlo Rosselli was his worthy comrade.

Descended from a family of Italian patriots, Rosselli had followed its glorious traditions. It was at his grandfather's house in Pisa that Giuseppe Mazzini, the famous Italian patriot, died on March 10, 1872, under a false name which he had taken to elude the police. The Rossellis had been devoted adherents of Mazzini and had participated in his struggle to achieve Italy's independence. They are rich and respected and

Carlo Rosselli could have enjoyed a life of leisure and luxury had he been so minded.

After fighting in the War as an officer in the Alpine troops, a famous corps in the Italian army, Rosselli devoted his wealth and brilliant talents to uplifting the poor and downtrodden among his countrymen. He soon became an ardent anti-Fascist. His house in Florence was attacked and pillaged by the Black Shirts. In 1926 he organised the flight of Filippo Turati from Italy. Turati, famous liberal leader, was an old man and his life was constantly menaced by the Fascists. The authorities would not allow him to leave Italy. So Rosselli, with the help of Ferruccio Parri, who is now also a deportee at Lipari, took him off in a motor boat to Corsica, where he was safe on French soil.

On their return to Italy, Rosselli and Parri were at once arrested. After spending many months in prison, they were sentenced to ten months in jail for having "assisted an Italian in leaving Italy without a passport." Upon ex-

piration of their prison term, they were once more sentenced to five years' deportation to a convict island.

Such were Carlo Rosselli and Emilio Lussu. Could I have found two better friends, two men more perfectly equipped by temperament and character to participate in the desperate adventure the thought of which now haunted me night and day?

Our friendship grew deep and strong in a surprisingly short time. We were bound together by our common secret. But in public, even among our fellow deportees, we pretended to be just ordinary friends. Even our most trusted comrades must not know that we had concluded a secret pact of life and death. And secretly we discussed our plans for escape.

Lussu was ready to embrace any scheme, even the most risky, to regain his liberty. But he was more carefully guarded than any of us, for the Fascists had not forgotten how he had calmly shot down that Black Shirt at Cagliari. His

house was watched day and night, and even when he went out for a walk he was followed at a distance by four detectives. In this, the island authorities were obeying special orders from Rome. If by any chance Lussu failed to leave his house at the usual hour, he was immediately visited by a detective who inquired politely after his health.

Rosselli and I were also watched, though less strictly. Rosselli was regarded as a dangerous deportee because he had staged the flight of Turati, and also because he was wealthy. Escape from Lipari costs money, like all enterprises of that nature, and the authorities always seemed rather nervous about him and evidently considered him as one of the deportees most likely to make some attempt to escape. However, from the beginning, Rosselli played a masterly comedy on the island, calculated to dispel all suspicions.

In January, 1928, Lussu was seriously ill with pleurisy, a disease he had contracted in the

damp cells of the prison at Cagliari. He was confined to his bed for a month and his convalescence was very slow. The hospital arrangements at Lipari consist of a large, bare room in the old castle, furnished with a few hard beds and a small medical chest. It is pompously called the "infirmary," and the doctor in charge of it is absolutely ignorant of medical science. As a matter of fact, he had never practised his profession before being appointed to look after the health of the deportees. His prescriptions were most erratic, and frequently he was altogether at a loss what to prescribe for his patients. There were many consumptives among the deportees, and the damp sea air affected them very unfavourably. Several were in the last stages of the terrible disease, literally dying without proper care or treatment.

One day, on visiting Lussu, I found several friends gathered around his bed, convulsed with laughter. One of them had just been recounting some new eccentricities of the authorities

entrusted with censoring the books that deportees were permitted to read.

It appeared that the mother of one of the deportees, by name Perazzi, had arrived that morning to visit her son and spend a few weeks with him.

Lieutenant Perri, of the Fascist Militia, examined the old lady's luggage on her debarkation. He found some books, and among them Carlyle's "French Revolution." He thumbed its pages suspiciously, and said to her:

"I'll examine this book at my leisure."

"But why, Lieutenant?" she asked. "It is a historical work, one of the most famous books in the English language. It is in every library."

"No matter, I must examine it myself."

"But surely, Lieutenant," interrupted Perazzi, who was present at the scene, "you must have read this book yourself. Don't you remember it? You must know that it is not forbidden."

Of course, Perazzi guessed that the Lieutenant had never in his life read Carlyle's "French

Revolution," but he hoped the officer would be ashamed to confess his ignorance.

"Read or not read," bawled the Lieutenant, "I tell you that this work must be carefully examined in order to determine whether it can enter the island!" And he put it in his pocket.

This incident was typical of the ignorance of the officers of the Fascist Militia. But the literary culture of the supreme authorities in Rome was not on a much higher level.

A few months later the library which the deportees had organised at Lipari was closed by order of the government. A list of all the books it contained was sent to Rome. The Roman censors struck more than five hundred books off the list, whereupon we were allowed to reopen our library.

Among the books condemned by the Roman authorities were the works of Dostoiewski, Turgeniev, Tolstoi, Gogol, Kuprin, Gorki, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Barbusse, Victor Margueritte, Carlyle, Mazzini, and Rabindranath

Tagore. Mr. Bernard Shaw's books formed an exception; after his short visit to Italy, during which he was guided by Signor Basile, a high official of the Fascist government, and acquired the conviction that "Italy has never been so prosperous and happy as under the Fascist régime," he is naturally *persona grata* with the "Duce" and his henchmen.

The library at Lipari still exists and is a great source of consolation to the deportees. But the censorship of books has become even more severe and grotesque since my escape from the island, and the day will surely come when only works extolling Fascism, and written and published by Fascists, will find a place on its shelves.

Lussu's illness alarmed us greatly. Rosselli and I visited him daily. As soon as we were alone he would ask:

"Is there any news?"

"Nothing for the moment."

"My God, if we could only find some way of getting out of this cursed island, I swear to you

that I would leave my bed immediately, fever and all, even if I had to *swim* to safety!"

They were prophetic words.

CHAPTER XIV

ESCAPE from Lipari is almost impossible. Lussu, Rosselli and I were the first prisoners who ever succeeded in escaping from that lonely island and reaching foreign soil, and so far, alas! we have been the last.

But, without our knowledge, daring fellow-deportees were animated by the same passionate desire for liberty.

While we were in the midst of our plans for flight, about the middle of July, 1928, we were startled by a sensational attempt to escape made by four deportees: Alfredo Michelagnoli, a young student, whom I have already mentioned, Mario Magri, one of d'Annunzio's legionaries, Giovan Canepa, a former army officer, and a certain Domaschi.

They had been deported for various reasons,

all political; but Domaschi's case was the most desperate, for he had been sentenced to no less than fifteen years' deportation for "conspiring against the State." He was a young man of few words, intelligent and calm. He had been at first sentenced to only one year of deportation. While he was serving his sentence, his mother, who was living in Rome, became seriously ill. She implored Mussolini to accord her the favour of seeing her son, if only for an hour, before she died. The Duce granted her request and Domaschi was permitted to close his mother's eyes. But shortly after his return to Lipari he was arrested, taken back to Rome and sentenced by the special courts to fifteen years, on a charge of having joined in a plot against the State with other anti-Fascists during the time he had spent at his mother's deathbed. At Lipari, Domaschi was imprisoned in the castle pending his transferal to a State penitentiary.

Domaschi realised that his only chance lay in effecting his escape before he was transferred to

a regular prison. In the castle he met Canepa and Michelagnoli. The three made plans for escape and decided to put them to the test at the first opportunity. It came with the arrival of a fourth cell-companion: Mario Magri, a former captain in the artillery, noted for his bravery in the War, and one of Gabriele d'Annunzio's legionaries at Fiume. All his illusions had been shattered by the lamentable termination of the Fiume adventure, which revealed d'Annunzio's profound egoism, morbid ambition and corruption.

Magri returned to Italy disgusted and, impelled by the spirit of adventure, went to Morocco and enlisted in the army of Abd-el-Krim, who was then fighting the French and the Spanish armies. He rose to command the rebel artillery and distinguished himself on many occasions, earning the Arab chieftain's unstinted praise. He remained with him until the end. In 1926 he was arrested in Milan, charged with "inciting former legionaries of d'Annunzio

against Fascism." As a matter of fact, many of the poet's former adherents had become anti-Fascists. Magri is still a prisoner on the island of Ponza.

One night the four prisoners broke out of their cell, climbed the high walls of the castle courtyard, let themselves down on the other side by means of ropes made out of their bedding and slipped out of the castle under the eyes of the militia.

Magri was disguised as a priest and Domaschi wore women's clothes. They passed through the village, avoiding the patrols and reached the open country. Their plan was to find a row-boat and gain the Sicilian coast.

Unfortunately all their daring proved vain. The alarm was given soon after their escape from the castle; armed patrols scoured the country-side and police boats equipped with powerful searchlights encircled the island.

Rosselli, Lussu and I took keen notice of everything, thinking of our own plans. We

were struck by the circumstance that, as soon as the alarm was given, the police visited our houses to make sure that we were present. Evidently we were under suspicion.

After five days of wandering in the wild interior of the island, Domaschi and his companions were recaptured. They were almost starved and dying of thirst when the carabineers surrounded them. They had been unable to find a boat suited to their purpose. A peasant to whom they had given a hundred liras for bread and water helped them, but his wife, terrified by the consequences of helping escaped prisoners, ran to the town and revealed their hiding-place to the police. Her husband, nevertheless, was arrested along with the fugitives and sentenced to five years' deportation on the island of Ustica.

Most of the other islanders joined with shotguns in the chase of the fugitives. Canepa and Michelagnoli were brutally beaten by the soldiers when they were taken.

One thing which this abortive attempt taught

us was that we must hasten our own plans if we wished to be successful, for every attempt to escape involved an increase of activity on the part of our guards. The number of sentinels was doubled, and for months police launches patrolled the sea around the island. We were often wakened in the middle of the night by carabineers, who entered our houses unexpectedly and counted us. The governor of the island announced emphatically that no more deportees were going to try to escape from Lipari.

However, Lussu, Rosselli and I continued our secret conferences, evolving schemes for flight. And here I must reveal that there were no longer three of us at these mysterious meetings. A fourth friend had joined us. To my great regret, I cannot, even now, reveal his real name, for he was the man who a few months later had to come personally, facing the most terrible risks, to deliver us from our island prison. Let us call him Fortunio. He had been at Lipari about two years. He is a man of the highest intelli-

gence and the purest idealism. In his early youth he had been a workman and lived the life of an Italian proletarian, but through diligent study he had acquired an education such as few men possess. He is profoundly versed in the natural sciences, in history, philosophy and social economy. At the age of eighteen he joined a democratic society. He was attacked and beaten by the Black Shirts, arrested over and over again, and sentenced to long terms in jail. He is as modest as he is brave and noble.

Fortunio, as I shall call him, was almost at the end of his term of deportation. He was due to leave Lipari in December, 1928. But, at that time, we were all still hoping to escape together. Fortunio was not so closely guarded as we were. It was easier for him to elaborate our plans and particularly to organise the system of communication with the outside world which was essential to our success.

Already in the summer of 1928 this system of communication, the details of which I cannot dis-

close because it may yet help other deportees to escape, was functioning very satisfactorily. But we were always full of anxiety, fearing that some accident might destroy the work of many weary months and ruin us and the friends who had promised to assist us.

Before adopting our final plan, we had considered various schemes, some of which could probably never have been realised.

We had thought of effecting our escape by means of a hydroplane, piloted by our friends, which would descend on the sea near the island openly while we were bathing. A few strong strokes would take us out to the plane, and we would board it and fly away before our guards had recovered from their surprise. The guards, of course, would fire on the plane, but it wasn't likely that they would hit it. We communicated this scheme to our friends beyond the sea, but it was finally abandoned.

Lussu had a plan typical of his undaunted courage. He proposed that at nightfall we

should seize by force one of the big police motor-boats lying in the port and make a dash in it for freedom. He pointed out that the boats were frequently guarded only by one sentinel. During the War he had performed many acts fully as bold, and he was eager to make the attempt. I believe that his scheme was practicable, although very risky. But we gave it up when we received definite news from our friends in Italy to the effect that they were prepared to come and take us off the island with a high-powered motor-boat, if we could provide them with exact information regarding the spot where we would be waiting for them and the surveillance exercised by the warships and police vessels that guarded the coast.

We managed, through the secret channels already mentioned, to supply them with all this information and a large-scale map of the island.

The undertaking was extremely risky and dangerous. On the little island of Vulcano, which, as its name indicates, has an active volcano

and which is only a few miles distant from Lipari, there is a naval semaphore station which is placed in such a position that it commands all approaches to Lipari for a distance of several miles during the daytime. Every vessel nearing the island is signalled to the police authorities. During the night a powerful searchlight perched on the crags of Vulcano sweeps the sea constantly.

Police boats were always lying in the port ready for service at a moment's notice and other boats guarded the coast. Often they lay hidden in tiny inlets keeping watch. Any suspicious noise, every fishing boat approaching the island, was at once reported to police headquarters.

We set to work to study the methods and movements of our guards with a patience and minuteness which only prisoners dominated by the one idea of escape are capable of. Every day we checked up on all new developments. When a police boat was undergoing repairs we

managed to find out how long she would be off duty. The strength of police or militia detachments sent to reinforce the garrison of the island was carefully noted. We learned the speed of all the boats and their radius of action.

All this information we communicated to our distant friends. I verily believe that in the end they knew the island, the customs of its inhabitants, the character of the Governor and his officers, the strength and distribution of its naval and military forces, as well as if they had been living on it for years. These preparations were begun during the last months of 1928 and continued until the eve of our escape.

Our most difficult problem was to determine the place where we should wait for our friends to take us on board their boat. It was necessary that it should fulfil two essential requirements: first, it must be near enough for us to reach easily at nightfall and to return from to our quarters before the evening roll-call in case our friends failed to meet us; second, it must be so

situated that our friends could approach it at high speed to within a few hundred yards of us without exciting suspicion.

We were forced to reckon with the possibility that our friends for some reason might be unable to be at the rendezvous at the hour fixed. In that case we would have to get back to our houses in time to be "present" when the night patrols made their rounds. If we were only half an hour late the alarm would be given and all our plans might be discovered.

The whole thing had to take place in less than forty-five minutes. In winter we should therefore have to start at 6.30 P.M. for the place of rendezvous, where our friends would be due at 7.15 P.M. If they failed to appear, we should just have time to slip back and be in our quarters at 7.30 P.M. The patrols passed at 7.45 P.M.

In summer this schedule was subject to slight modification; we should start at 8.45 P.M. and wait at the rendezvous until 9.15 P.M. for the arrival of our friends. In the event of their fail-

ing us, we could be back home by 9.30 P.M. and answer the roll-call when the patrols passed fifteen minutes later.

It was arranged that our friends on sighting the island should develop motor trouble and lie far out at sea until nightfall, out of range of the semaphore on Vulcano and the signal stations on the other islands of the group. Then they were to dash in at full speed, turning off their motors when within a few hundred yards of the rendezvous and letting their boat drift noiselessly until we could swim out and be picked up by them.

At first we had thought of a rendezvous on the opposite side of the island from that on which we were quartered in the little town of Lipari under its frowning castle. That part of the coast is almost deserted and in the cliffs are many natural caves which afford good hiding-places. Moreover, it is less strictly guarded. But in order to reach it we should have been compelled to pass through the line of sentinels that enclosed the limited district assigned to us, and if our friends

did not come we should have been unable to return in time for the roll-call, even if we had succeeded in slipping back through the lines without being discovered. For these reasons the idea of selecting a point on the opposite shores of the island for our rendezvous with our friends, although very alluring in some respects, was finally abandoned.

We decided that our greatest chance of success lay in extreme boldness and determined to choose a place "within bounds." Our friends endorsed our decision, although it involved far greater risk for them, as the area in which we were allowed to move was so restricted that they would practically have to put their heads in the lion's mouth in coming to fetch us.

Overlooking the little port of Lipari stands an ancient building, long abandoned, which the islanders call the "haunted house." None of the superstitious fisher-folk could be induced to go near it. It had a terrace on the sea and was built right against the high grass-grown walls of

the castle. We fixed our eyes on that house; we studied its position relative to the thoughts we had in mind, the streets that led to it and the best way of reaching it unobserved. The great castle hanging over it placed the house in shadow, which was very favourable to our plans. Our friends' boat could come close in and lie under the rocks in the darkness, and we could let ourselves down from the terrace by ropes and swim out to it.

The question was how to get into the house. It was locked and shuttered, and the owner was not allowed to let deportees enter it. Some time before a homeless deportee had lived in it for a few days, but he had been expelled by the police. Nevertheless, we managed to visit that "haunted house" several times. We encountered no ghosts, but we examined its bare rooms, measured the height of the terrace, and evolved a method of entering and leaving it unobserved. Fortunio revealed all his resourceful daring on this occasion. We notified our friends and sent them

plans of the house and its position. All seemed to be going well.

But we were not fated to leap to freedom from the terrace of the "haunted house"; and all the risks we had run in exploring it proved vain.

While we were anxiously awaiting the final signal from our friends announcing their coming, the island was thrown into an uproar by an event that plunged the police into frantic activity and caused us grave apprehension.

CHAPTER XV

A YOUNG Venetian deportee, by name Spangero, had disappeared, and it was believed that he had succeeded in escaping from the island.

For days police and soldiers scoured every part of Lipari. The greatest excitement prevailed among the prisoners, who were absolutely taken by surprise, for the fugitive had confided his plans to none of his comrades. Although we knew that his act imperilled our own chances of success, because it would inevitably be followed by stricter measures of surveillance, we prayed that fortune might favour him.

But after several days poor Spangero was brought back in the midst of a squad of Fascist militia, handcuffed, half-clothed and utterly exhausted.

This is what had happened:

Spangero, a young man of great daring and physical strength, which he had proved in many actions against the Fascists, had quietly left his quarters one evening about 7 P.M. and walked down to the harbour front, near the "haunted house," where he had noticed a canoe moored to the quay. The canoe was of the type used by swimmers in summer resorts for amusement while bathing off the beach. It was not designed for the open sea.

Nevertheless, Spangero, who had put on his bathing costume, got into it and paddled boldly out of the harbour in the darkness, heading for the Sicilian coast. He counted on calm weather and his muscles of steel.

Unfortunately, there was a heavy sea running outside the bay. The canoe capsized, and Spangero was forced to swim back to land. He reached a deserted part of the coast and decided to conceal himself in the interior of the island.

In the meantime his absence had been noticed

and the alarm given. In the morning the canoe was washed ashore. And thus the attention of the police was directed to the "haunted house," near which the fugitive had found it. The house and its surroundings were henceforth watched and guarded night and day, and we were forced to abandon the idea of using it for our rendezvous. We passed some anxious hours, fearing that our message informing our friends of the alteration in our plans would not reach them in time.

Spangero was captured a few days later under dramatic circumstances. He hid himself in caves and ditches during the day, eluding the patrols that were searching for him all over the island, and at night stole into the town, crawling through the line of sentinels, to provide himself with food and water. The police authorities were furious.

One night, Spangero succeeded in slipping into Canneto, a small port not far from the town of Lipari, where foreign steamers frequently

call for cargoes of pumice stone, the island's chief article of export. He found a German ship lying in the port, and, swimming out to it, climbed up the anchor chains. He arrived on deck covered with blood, for the rusty chains had torn the skin off his body. He gave the captain to understand by signs, being completely ignorant of the German language, that he was a political fugitive and that he wanted the captain to hide him and take him away in his ship.

The captain, it appears, was about to consent, when the first officer interposed, pointing out that the responsibility of assisting a prisoner to escape was too great and that discovery might lead to grave complications. The carabineers were called and Spangero was delivered into their hands. Some time later he was sentenced to three years imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 liras for having "attempted to emigrate secretly," in spite of the fact that he declared he had had no intention of going abroad and had

only asked the captain to put him ashore at the first Italian port at which the ship called.

The failure of Spangero's attempt confirmed our conviction that escape from Lipari was possible—if at all—only after long and careful preparations.

At this time our friends informed us that they also were encountering unexpected difficulties in perfecting their plans. We felt downcast and disappointed, but we were careful to conceal our feelings. Lussu and Rosselli were admirable actors. Being more closely watched than Fortunio and I, they had to exercise far greater powers of dissimulation.

For almost a year now, Lussu had been living the same, in appearance, methodical and regular life. Every morning at 11 o'clock he left his quarters and went for a walk until noon, always followed by four detectives. Every evening without exception he went out at 5:30 P.M. and came back at 6:30 P.M. in the winter months, and at 7:30 and 8:30 P.M. in summer. The police were

by this time so accustomed to his rigid regularity and apparently immutable system of exercise that they gradually began to believe that the tales they had been told about Lussu's dangerous character must be exaggerated. Since his illness, Lussu had also very skilfully spread reports that he was a victim of consumption and that he was obliged to live so regularly in order to avoid a relapse. In reality, although his illness had been very grave, he was now entirely restored to health. However, even the deportees were convinced that he was in a very precarious condition. And so the watchfulness of the police relaxed somewhat.

Rosselli adopted a different system to dispel suspicion. Soon after his arrival at Lipari he began to live the life of a prisoner who is resigned to his fate and satisfied to serve his sentence and get it over with. He pretended to take great interest in his house, a very pleasant place a little way out of the village, just inside the boundary line. He had it repaired and fur-

nished it with taste. The work of repairing and refurnishing the house went on until the very day of our flight. He hired a piano, made plans for constructing a compressed air pump to draw water from the well in the garden. A few days before our escape, he requested permission from the governor to construct a spring-board on the beach where we used to go swimming. In fact, he did everything to make the authorities believe that he was resigned to his fate and preparing to serve his sentence of deportation on the island with a good grace.

He was one of the very few deportees who were received courteously in the offices of the island authorities. That was because Rosselli was always the first to salute them on the street. They were greatly impressed by these marks of respect from a prisoner who was considered a particularly dangerous and implacable opponent of the Fascist régime.

At first, his wealth had made the police fear that he might attempt to use it as a means of

escape, but eventually they came to believe that just because he was rich and able to make a comfortable life for himself on the island he was unlikely to jeopardise his certainty of ease and leisure in Italy after serving his term by engaging in any desperate adventure.

Often I was forced to smile when fellow-deportees used to ask me:

"Why does Lussu always go out exactly at 7:30 P.M. and retire at 8:30 P.M.? I understand he is still ailing, and the cool evening air cannot be good for him."

I answered that Lussu was a maniac in things like that. I knew very well that if Lussu had adhered to that schedule for a year and a half, it was because he knew that one evening he would have to leave his house again, secretly and unobserved, never to return. . . .

Winter came. October and November passed, with their rains and storms. The sea was always rough. Our distant friends could not think of coming to fetch us in such weather, for abso-

lute punctuality was necessary if our plans were to succeed. We resigned ourselves to waiting several months longer.

Fortunio had served his two years deportation and left us. He had been ready to participate in our escape, even when he only had a few months left to serve. His resolution excited our admiration. Before parting from him, we arranged that after staying a short time with his family in Italy, he should slip across the border to a foreign country and help organise our escape. Nevertheless, we were loath to part from him, for his knowledge of the island, his courage and daring, filled us with supreme confidence.

Let me say right away that Fortunio was entirely successful in carrying out the plans we had made with him. Although strictly and constantly watched by the police in Italy, like all former deportees, he succeeded in crossing the frontier and making the necessary preparations to return and liberate us.

The last winter we passed on Lipari was the

gloomiest time of all. Life seemed more hopeless and monotonous than ever. For the first time in thirty years it snowed and intense cold gripped the island. Every day there was wind and rain. The wind shook the fragile houses, shrieking down the streets. We remained at home all day, reading and talking. In December I went to live with Lussu. During the long winter nights, while the sleet was beating against our windows, we cowered over a charcoal brazier and endlessly discussed our plans for escape.

At midnight, on December 31, 1928, Lussu and I welcomed the New Year which held for us the greatest of all aspirations and hopes: Freedom. All the church bells rang out, dominated by the deep-voiced bells of the cathedral beside the grim old castle. That chorus of metal voices seemed to encourage us to exercise patience and fortitude.

The decisive moment was approaching. The spring brought with its perfume of flowers and mild breezes wonderful news.

Fortunio informed us that the preparations for our escape were rapidly maturing and exhorted us to keep up our spirits and wait patiently. It was an extraordinary experience for us to receive such words of encouragement from one who, only a few months before, had been our fellow-prisoner on the island.

April and May passed, and every morning on awaking, we all had the same thought: "Perhaps today we shall start."

And one day the news came at last. The same mysterious wings that had brought us so many words of hope and encouragement in the past, brought us the best news of all. Our friends informed us that they would come in their boat to take us off the island one evening in the first fortnight of July.

CHAPTER XVI

FEVERISHLY we made our final preparations. In a series of secret meetings, arranged with painstaking care, we rehearsed the plan of action, as in the war details of a complicated attack were worked out in advance. Each point was discussed and agreed upon.

Rosselli lived in a house on the very edge of the village and therefore furthest distant from the rendezvous on the coast. "Zero hour" for him was fixed earliest of all, so that his arrival would synchronise with ours, as it would take us less time to get there.

Lussu was the most carefully watched and thus ran the largest measure of risk—although there was risk enough for all. Simply for one

of the four hundred police agents or Fascist militia to have seen him would have been enough to wreck our plans. For once seen on the street inevitably he would be followed, as out of the house he was always trailed by four detectives. And then the schedule which he had devised and scrupulously lived up to for a year and a half had accustomed the authorities to his presence out of doors only between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning, and in the evening from seven-thirty to eight-thirty. Once detected at other hours, and unaccompanied by his guards, of course he would have been stopped, or, even worse, followed to his destination. The consequences of such a disaster are obvious.

It was agreed that Lussu would take his usual walk. As always, he would return at exactly eight-thirty. His guards would see him enter the house, and thereafter, as usual, assume that he was safely in for the night, and go their ways. But this time Lussu was to disguise himself in some peasant clothes and get out of a balcony

window at the back of the house, which gave on to a courtyard whence it was easy to slip into a nearby dark and deserted lane.

We had many rehearsals of Lussu's part. His disguise was that of an old fisherman. The clothes and "props" had been carefully gathered through many months, little by little to evoke no possible suspicion. He played the part admirably. With his ragamuffin costume draped around him, a rough scarf around his neck and a disreputable hat pulled down on his head, with a pipe in his mouth and his usually straight back bent into a limping curve, we felt him quite unrecognisable, even at close quarters.

Mine was the easiest task. No special watch was kept on me, and so it seemed wise for me to go undisguised, following, though, a little-used back road.

At last the great day came, dragged out its interminable course, and was followed by eagerly-awaited dusk.

Punctual almost to a second, we three arrived

at the appointed spot. Everything had worked. Apparently no suspicion had been roused.

Our chosen starting point was very near the centre of the village, just at the right side of the port and opposite the haunted house location which I have before mentioned. A small quay reaches out from land on the side of the harbour we had chosen. It is about eighty metres long, is flanked by a few old storehouses and in the daytime is frequented by occasional groups of dock labourers and now and then a hopeful amateur fisherman. But at night the quay is deserted, and, fortunately for our plans, it lies deep in the shadows of the houses which stand on the higher rocky slopes behind it. And, happily, nearly all those houses are deserted.

Getting to the quay was the hard part, for in approaching it we ran grave risk of encountering a contingent of armed Fascisti always on duty in the vicinity.

But that evening all went well. No soldier saw us and nothing interfered with our stealthy

approach to the welcome shadows. After a whispered word, we undressed at the outer end of the quay and slipped silently into the black water.

Moving as quietly as we could, we swam some 150 metres along the rocky coast, finally stopping near a very high rock which marked our appointed meeting place. It was there our rescuers were to come, and it was there, immersed in the water up to our necks, that we waited.

Minutes passed. Nothing broke the darkness. The silence was absolute—no noise of a muffled engine came to our straining ears. Slowly the exultation of our first success turned to dismal suspense. It was heartbreaking. There we were, with our part of the business accomplished thanks to wonderful good fortune. But where were our friends?

In an agony of doubt we waited until nine-thirty. That was the limit we had allowed ourselves—to stay longer meant almost certain

detection upon our return. Nobody came. Shivering in the water, in whispers we decided to risk a further wait. For another breathless ten minutes we held our ground. In vain!

As fast as we could, we swam along the shore to the quay, dressed in the dark and hastened back our several ways, our hearts heavy with despair for the plan which had failed, and oppressed with the certainty that we should be caught and our last chance lost.

But again luck favoured us. With our clothes sticking to our wet bodies, Lussu and I reached the house without incident. Scarcely three minutes after our arrival the patrol passed on its nightly check-up.

"Present!" we called out, our voices emotionless, though our hearts were racked with disappointment.

That was perhaps the hardest night of my life—a night of doubt and disillusionment, of poignant worry as to what had befallen our friends who had not come, and of searching

sorrow for the frustration of the plan which seemed on the very verge of ending our imprisonment. After thirty months, freedom had seemed for me well within reach. And then the hope had been snatched away. How many more months of Lipari lay before us?

Rosselli, we learned next day, also had made it with only minutes to spare. Fortunately no one had seen him racing like a madman through unfrequented lanes and across fields.

From that cross-country race Rosselli had as a souvenir a great bruise on his face, just below his left eye.

"I was short-cutting through a vineyard in the dark and stumbled on a vine," he told us. "I fell head foremost, full on to the top of one of the iron posts used to hold up the vines. An inch higher and it would have taken out my eye, but luckily it just did this to my face."

Our real good fortune, of course, lay in the fact that the police suspected nothing. At least, we were no worse off than we had been before.

And later, through our system of information, we learned that rough seas had delayed our friends. They had started according to schedule and progressed well until nearly half way to the island. Then the sea became increasingly rough, and finally they had to turn back, actually making the return voyage with great difficulty and narrowly escaping being swamped by heavy seas.

Then another message filtered through. The boat was ready. The weather was propitious. At the appointed hour they would come.

CHAPTER XVII

THE night of July twenty-seventh, 1929, was the most momentous of my life. In mid-afternoon the three of us—Lussu, Rosselli and I—separated. We realised that if all did not go well it might be the last time we ever would see each other. Our rendezvous, if fortune favoured us, was in the sea, at eight-thirty-five that night.

Those last hours of my deportee's life I passed wandering aimlessly about the village, just as so many other afternoons and evenings had passed in the weary months of our captivity. After chatting with groups of friends encountered on the streets I entered "our" café. It is a modest place, the proprietor an islander. But it came to be known as the "deportees' café" and a convention had grown up that it was frequented only by

us prisoners, the officers never entering but patronising another establishment a short distance away, which to us was forbidden by custom if not by any rule.

There I chatted with friends until the clock on the municipal building struck eight-thirty.

"Good night, boys," I announced. "I'm tired and think I'll turn in early. Good-bye until to-morrow!"

Poor chaps! They are still on that island of grief. May they forgive me for that false farewell!

"Good-bye until to-morrow!"

In my heart I hoped, more than all else, that on the morrow I would not see them. But each one of them would have tried to hide his trail in lies as I did, under similar circumstances.

Then I started to walk, very slowly, toward my house. Halfway to it, I abruptly changed my course, and, first making sure that I was not observed, hastened down to the port. Everything was silent. Apparently all was as I wished

it. The heavy evening shadows seemed to reach out friendly, protecting arms, hiding me as I dodged down the quay, easily avoiding the patrols.

But at the end of the dark quay I found neither Lussu nor Rosselli. That troubled me. But there was no time to worry. We had agreed that the first to arrive should not wait for the others. If one, or even two, could not get there, the fortunate ones should proceed as best they could.

So I slipped out of my clothes and again swam, as we had done a fortnight before, to the rocky point which by now seemed very familiar to me. I moved through the water as silently as possible, trying not to splash.

At the destination I waited, all but my head hidden in the water. From there I could see a good portion of the port, a few fishermen on the quay, a Fascist patrol along the shore and a group of boys at play. All that was clearly distinguishable in the remaining half-light, although

I myself was buried in the shadows of the cliff above me.

Suddenly the noise of a motor came to my ears. I could see nothing. The sound came nearer and nearer. Then, although apparently nearer, the sound diminished. That meant they had put on the "silencer." All at once out of the shadows emerged a darker shadow, definitely taking shape like a long black cigar lying close to the water.

It was my friends! No doubt of that now. I recognised the characteristics of the boat, just as they had described them to me.

The boat by now was perhaps twenty metres distant. Not a light on board. A horrible thought struck me—suppose it was a launch of the police? Some trick. . . . No, that could not be. It could only be *my* boat, at this exact place, at the precise hour and minute appointed.

Then, close to the water, intended for my eyes alone, a tiny spot of light flashed momentarily from the shadowy craft. That was the signal! No further doubts!

Desperately I swam toward them. As I approached the sound of the motors died away. I was almost touching the boat's side before they saw me, and then, midst stifled cries of mutual joy, they reached over and hauled me on board.

Immediately I recognised "X," who had organised the rescue. Dear friend! Brave man! Then in the darkness I distinguished the features of "Z," another friend, a man of great intelligence and energy, and, as it fortunately happened, an experienced sailor. Formerly he was an officer in the navy, but recently had been in exile. A third figure appeared from the cabin, silently grasping my hand—three true friends, who had risked their lives that we might regain our freedom.

"You are alone?" "X" asked me at once. "The others? Where are the others?"

"I was the first to arrive at the appointed place. I waited but did not see them," I explained. "They will come. There's no doubt about it."

My teeth were chattering, my breath still coming in gasps after the frantic effort of that swim. A coat thrown around my shoulders and a vigorous drink of brandy pulled me together.

"Where can they be? It's nearly nine-fifteen." "X" was increasingly worried. "We ought to be on our way by now."

Strain our eyes as we would, there was nothing to be seen inshore. What had happened? Had they been captured? If the latter, the uproar was sure to start at any moment.

"Z" studied the port about us. In the open roadstead a line of lights indicated the Sicilian fishing boats. In the port other lights marked fishermen preparing for the morning's work, and police craft.

"What's that ugly red light on our right?" "Z" asked.

"A boat of the custom house officers."

"And that white light in front of us?"

"That's a fishing boat entering the . . ." My

whispered explanation remained unfinished. Suddenly we were aware of a terrible catastrophe which had overtaken us. With the motors shut off, a strong current was sweeping us straight into the harbour! All at once we realised the swift change in our position as our launch moved out from the shadows into the full light from the port square.

Just a few metres distant we could see the people walking about, the couples at the tables, clusters of militia and police. And close at hand, there was a patrol on the quay!

With a rush my friends broke out the oars from their lashings, got them over the side and did their best to move the boat back against that current. But they could not do it. Their utmost efforts were in vain. Inch by inch we crept further into the tell-tale glare.

It was a tense moment. Should we turn on the motors and make our escape? That meant deserting the others. It was unthinkable! Yet here we were with success in our very grasp and

the horrible likelihood of complete failure—probably death—hanging over us by a thread.

In those awful minutes of suspense Providence was good to us. Our craft was in full view of hundreds ashore. Its details were not, of course, clear, but the presence at the very mouth of the harbour of an unlighted boat, silently drifting, should have been enough to arouse a far less suspicious audience. But no one cried out. No one paid the least attention. Probably any soldiers who noticed us at all took us for one of the police boats. After all, they were sure that no strange craft was just then within many, many miles of Lipari.

"Z" had the amazing good-humour to make a joke of our precarious position.

"At this rate," he whispered with a smile, "in twenty minutes we will be at the café in the square and can get a drink to cheer us up!"

It was close to nine-thirty now. In a few minutes the patrols would make the rounds of our residences and our absences—certainly mine

—would be noted and the alarm given. In whispers I was explaining that to the others when suddenly "X" gripped my arm.

"There! Look!"

He pointed over the stern. Sure enough, two blacker shadows moved toward us through the grey shadows of the water's surface—the heads of our two friends, swimming toward us.

"Here we are. It's us!" The breathless low cry came from the swimmers.

"The motors!" "Z" gave the order.

No further need of prudence, now. Our hope of safety lay in speed.

Instantly the motors roared into life, splitting the silence of the night with a machine-gun deluge of sound.

The boat responded magnificently, like a hunting horse gathering speed for a great jump. She literally bounded forward, skilfully guided by "Z" who brought her around close to the swimmers. In a matter of seconds we had them on board. The prow swung seaward. The motors

opened wide. The great waves of our wake reached out astern and clouds of spray rolled back as our gallant boat's prow cut the waters that lay between us and Freedom.

And behind, pandemonium broke loose! The Duce's "Devil's Island" was aroused. A police boat, starting in pursuit, was no sooner under way than its motor coughed and stopped.

"No matter," yelled "Z" in my ear. "Let them come. There's not one of them within ten miles of our speed."

But none came. Of real race there was none. As we roared out into the night, except for the echoes of our engines, fast diminishing, there was no trail for pursuers to follow.

"At least," said Rosselli with a laugh, "they have our clothes as a souvenir!"

CHAPTER XVIII

AN odd picture those first minutes of our escape would have made! In the tense excitement of the get-away all of us thought only of putting distance between ourselves and the Island of Lipari. A little matter of what we wore—rather, what we did not wear—counted for nothing. It was the shivering cold of exposure and not self-consciousness which brought to Lussu and Rosselli a realisation of their un-heroic costume.

To be exact, they had no costume. Plucked dripping from the water, they crouched naked in the bottom of the boat until our rescuers suddenly became aware of their condition. There were warm trousers and coats and sweaters for all of us, and soon we found ourselves comfortably, if not elegantly, clad.

Shouting in my ear, Lussu told me what had happened. As planned, he had left the house disguised as the old fisherman, loafing along the street with the pipe in his mouth and the battered hat drawn down about his face. But twice on the way to the quay he was intercepted by patrols, to avoid each being obliged to make long detours which brought him late to the quay. And there, worst luck of all, he encountered another group of militia which cut off his path and refused to move on.

"I actually had to sit down on a rock, in full view of them," Lussu told me. "All they saw was a tired old fisherman, sucking his pipe. The infernal idiots kept chatting with each other, at one time not more than a dozen feet away from me. Finally, to my relief, they passed on, going back to the square where they usually had their station. If they'd looked back they would have had the surprise of their lives seeing that decrepit old man disappear in the shadows!"

So Lussu swam out to the rock, and there

found no one. Shortly, however, Rosselli put in an appearance. And after minutes of agonised waiting, finally they spied us, and, as they started to swim seaward, were in turn seen from our boat and picked up.

Rosselli's exit, as he later described it to me, was daring in the extreme, not from choice but because at the last minute he found the route he had chosen blocked by Fascists, who just happened to be moving about exactly where we most wished they were not.

"I started to run, because I knew that already I was late," he told me. "But at once I caught the curious eyes of a group of women regarding me. That brought me to my senses. There was nothing to do but bluff. And bluff I did."

So, as slowly as he could make his impatient feet carry him, Rosselli walked deliberately through the principal streets in an almost straight course to the quay. Officers of the militia and the commandant of the marine sat in the café eating ices. To them, as he passed,

the escaping refugee saluted deferentially, pursuing his way with his head bent as if in deep thought. Which indeed he was—wondering what would be his fate if any one of them actually recognised him.

All that night we raced at full speed, our hearts in our mouths each time a motor "coughed" or deviated at all from the full-throated roar of its explosive progress. Good engines, those, and well tended. Never once, in all that anxious journey, did they seriously falter.

Until dawn our eyes strained astern, hoping against hope that we'd see no lights of pursuing vessels. But nothing broke the blackness, except a bit before midnight, as we rounded the extreme cape of the Island of Vulcano, we were forced to dash between the lights of many fishing boats. However, though we were roundly cursed, we ran the gauntlet unquestioned. After all, the fishermen by then knew nothing of the escape, and if they did see a speeding

motor boat, likely enough a police patrol of some kind, experience warned them it was better not to be too curious.

During that night I had the chance to talk a bit with "Z," whose reputation I already knew well. He had been in the navy for many years, taking part in the Italian-Turkish war of 1912 and in the Great War from its start. On the Piave River he fought on land with the marines. And when Fascism came, he fought that, too, from the beginning, finally being forced to emigrate at the sacrifice of much that he held dear. The wonderful technical success of the rescue was largely due to his preparation and skill, for it is no slight task for a frail motor boat such as ours, with complex, high-speed engines, to make a forced journey of a thousand miles from its base and return, without a mishap.

On the morning of July 28 we rounded the northern coast of Sicily. And there, as daylight made us an easy prey for searchers, we had a nervous time, for we were sure, of course, that

the warships had been notified and might well be waiting, if they had guessed correctly the line of our flight. But our luck held. The expanse of calm blue sea was unbroken by any vessel, the blue sky unruffled by the smoke of pursuing funnels.

A little later, as we were abreast of the island of Marettimo, the last bit of Italian soil near our course, we had a momentary scare. A ship appeared over the horizon, on our starboard hand. Through our glasses it looked suspiciously like a battleship. Suffice to say, it was not, and in a quarter of an hour or so, our fears evaporated, for the stranger proved to be only a merchantman bound toward the Sicilian coast.

That afternoon we touched land—free land! For the first time in thirty months my feet were upon soil where I stood an equal with my neighbours, no longer a prisoner deprived of liberty and at the beck and call of brutal guards and at the mercy of stool-pigeons.

A few days later we were in Paris. Words

THE ESCAPE. THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF A FREE SHORE LOOMING OFF THE STARBOARD BOW.

are inadequate to express all that meant to us. For Paris represented not only liberty, but as well all the amenities of civilisation which we had so long lacked. After our remote island, with its discomforts and privations, Paris was a heaven on earth. I remember that at first the noise struck me as the outstanding characteristic of the metropolis. It had been long since we had heard a taxi or a tram!

We were of course taken to the hearts of the Italian political exiles who find in Paris a refuge from Fascist persecution, and what a joy it was to meet and talk with these men, many of the best brains that Italy has produced—former ministers, deputies, editors, educators, scholars. All of them overjoyed to welcome us, and all of them mourning for the freedom and the glory that has departed, for the time being, from their fatherland.

And in Paris I met again, after years of separation, my distinguished uncle, Francesco Nitti, formerly Premier of Italy, and my aunt and

cousins. A hospitable welcome awaited us in the Nitti home, where an atmosphere pervaded of kindly tolerance and democracy, a warmth and homeliness unspoiled by the threats, dangers and persecutions of years of exile.

The Press, of course, was vastly interested in our exploit and what lay behind it. We were deluged with interviewers and with offers from newspapers and periodicals from all over the world. But it was America which appeared most stirred by our escape and what we were able to tell about actual conditions in Italy and her prison islands, and of the great numbers of distinguished citizens who are still held on them incommunicado, taken from their homes and cast into jail without any process of law, without hearing and without redress.

As the excitements of those first Parisian days subsided, a feeling of sorrow returned to us. What of the good friends we had left behind? What effect would our escape have upon the lives of all those others, less fortunate, before

whom lay months and years of weary servitude?

Our anxiety was justified, for soon news filtered in telling us that, as we had feared, discipline on the islands had been stiffened and conditions in many ways made harder for the prisoners. At Ponza, for instance, bloody scenes had been enacted, and a veritable reign of terror inaugurated for its inmates.

Knowledge of all that sobered our selfish happiness over our own good fortune. And, indeed, no patriotic Italian could be truly content knowing, as we all know, that in truth Italy to-day is a single great prison, where reaction, clericalism and ignorance have supplanted political progress, freedom of speech and enlightened independence.

In all civilised countries the years are reckoned from the Birth of Christ. In Italy only, coupled with the customary "A.D." dating, one is supposed to add the date as reckoned from the birth of Fascism—Year VII of the new era! A horrible blasphemy that, ordered by the man

who for years proclaimed that religion is merely "opium for the soul."

We had regained our liberty in the year Seven of the new era. And firmly we believe that the people of Italy will regain theirs ere long, and all of us soberly and gladly return, when the political mania of the present is forgotten, to the age-old reckoning of time from the Birth of Christ.

POSTSCRIPT

THERE were some after-shadows which partly clouded the joy of our liberation.

Four days after our flight, on the 31st of July, the wife of Carlo Rosselli, by birth a British woman, was arrested at Courmayeur in Piemonte. Madam Rosselli had, before her marriage, been a Professor at the British Institute in Florence.

From Courmayeur, where she had been staying for some time with her two-year-old son, she was at once transported to Aosta, and there put in a prison where she shared a cell with street prostitutes.

Madam Rosselli suffers from heart complaint and was at that time in an interesting condition. After a horrible night and day in a crowded cell

quite lacking in light and air, she finally secured the attention of the prison physician and ultimately was transferred to a room in a neighbouring hotel. There she remained a prisoner with police at the door and window of the room. No one was allowed to see her except the officials, and a little later her husband's mother.

The police seemed to believe that she must know of her husband's escape, and from her tried to obtain the details of the Lipari adventure. But Carlo Rosselli, characteristically, had told his wife nothing whatever of the plan. For instance, once before in 1926, when he prepared and executed the flight from Italy of the deputy Turati, Madam Rosselli had known nothing at all about it until she learned the news of his arrest in the newspapers.

So in vain the police tried to learn from her what she did not know herself. And, incidentally, she was told that her arrest had been ordered from Rome and that without doubt she would be found guilty as an accomplice, which

in the routine of such matters would mean that she would be obliged to fill her husband's place on the penal island.

Another immediate revenge of the Fascist government was the seizure of Nello, Rosselli's brother, a distinguished student of history and an author. He was arrested in Florence on the 29th of July. He also was accused of complicity in the escape and within a few hours was shipped in chains to the island of Ustica, condemned without a hearing to a term of five years.

Nello, like his sister-in-law, knew nothing whatsoever of our plans. He had been living quietly in Florence, immersed in his studies and totally unconnected with any political activities. A few months previously, indeed, he had asked permission to pay a visit to his brother at Lipari —a permission which the government refused. But in this case it was enough that Nello was the brother of Carlo.

A few days after our arrival in Paris, Rosselli learned what had happened to his wife and his

brother. During those first days of our freedom, the press, and especially the American and English newspapers, had given a great deal of attention to our escape. So now Rosselli called in the newspaper representatives and told them what had happened to his wife and brother. And at once the press of the world told the story. In England the newspapers, of whatever political view, took the matter up most seriously. The editor of the *Manchester Guardian* sent a telegram to Mussolini asking direct confirmation of the news of the arrest in Italy of an English woman, and manifesting the British public's vital interest in the matter.

Apparently the Italian government suddenly became panic-stricken and through the mouth of its Ambassador in London, Signor Bordonaro, denied that any arrest had been made. The Fascist Ambassador declared in a communication to the London press that Madam Rosselli was perfectly free in Italy.

At once Carlo Rosselli in an open letter to

the newspapers challenged the Ambassador to prove what he said. Rosselli declared that he, himself, could prove with documentary evidence that his wife was at that moment actually under arrest. The Ambassador answered nothing at all.

The *Manchester Guardian* in a ringing editorial protested against the barbarous methods of the authorities at Rome. Other editors took up the cry, and soon the campaign became so intense that Mussolini's government had to run to cover.

Thirteen days after our liberation the Italian newspapers for the first time printed a brief statement of the escape—the first public word of it that had appeared within Italy. On the 15th of August the release of Madam Rosselli was ordered. She returned to Courmayeur, where a few days later she received the news that the government would equip her with a passport to leave Italy.

The Fascist change of front was a brilliant

tribute to the power of international publicity and free speech.

But while Madam Rosselli soon was able to rejoin her husband, unfortunately Professor Nello Rosselli is still a prisoner on one of the "Devil Islands" of the Fascist régime. Today he is interned on the island of Ponza. And just now I have learned the grave difficulties which have come to the four hundred anti-Fascists at Ponza, where, it is reliably reported, the militia actually fired on the deportees without motive. And then, too, I learned early in November that a very dear friend of ours at Lipari was arrested the day after our escape. Of course he was accused of complicity.

That news has shocked and grieved us dreadfully. This brave young man has already been on the island about two years. The only ground for suspicion against him is that he happens to be one of our best friends. There could be no proof that he had any hand whatsoever in our undertaking, for he, like everyone else on the

island, was kept absolutely in the dark. We had no help from fellow prisoners. We made no confidants.

But in a case of this kind no proof or evidence is necessary. Our friend will be tried for our escape. And doubtless before him lie many more weary years of servitude on Lipari.

To him, and to all the other brave men there, and the thousands of free thinkers throughout Italy who dwell in constant dread, our hearts go out.

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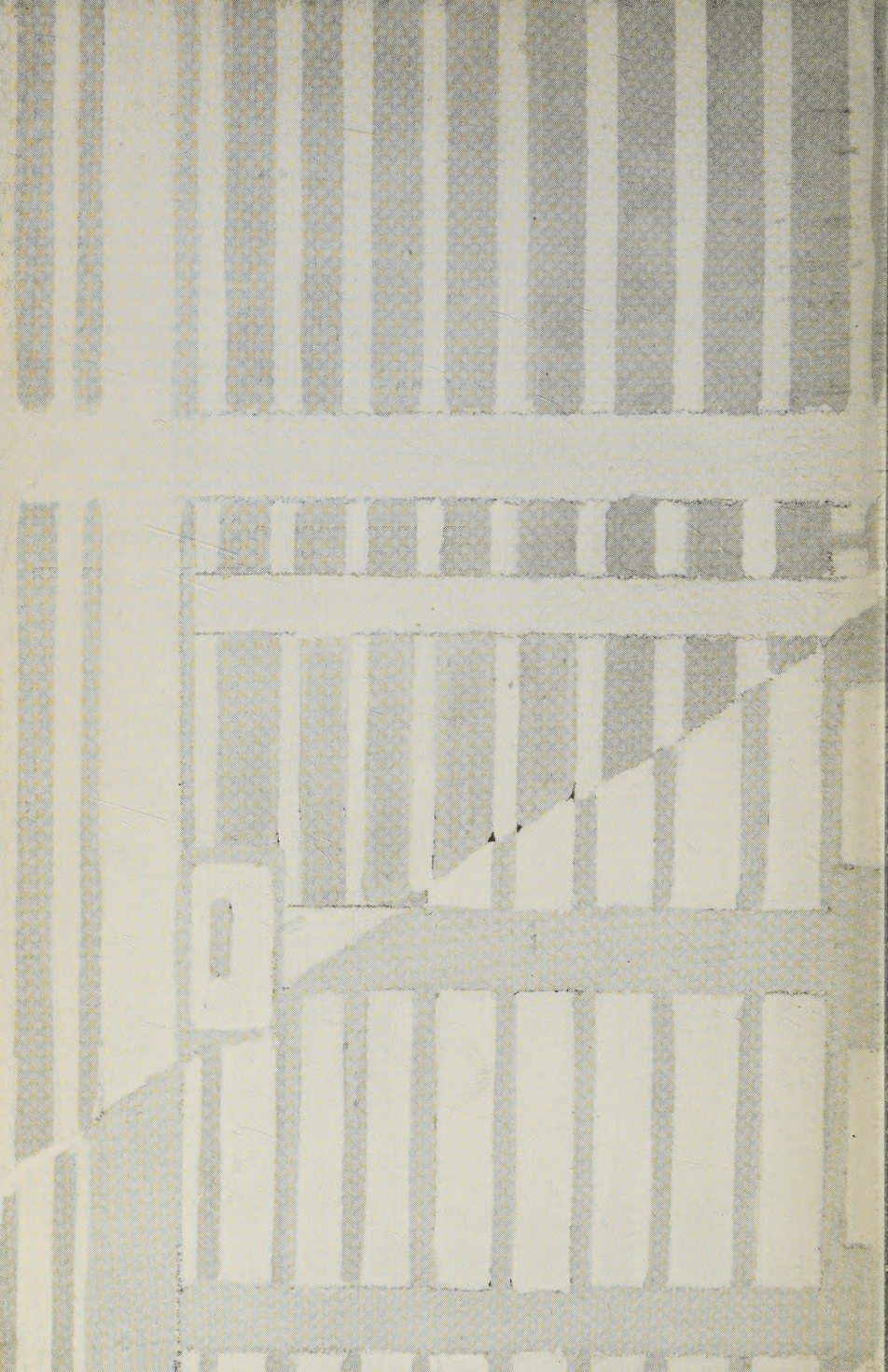

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